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this issue:
BORIS VALLEJO
RICHARD CORBEN
JIM STARLIN

and an
all-new series
LAST OF
THE DRAGONS

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DECEMBER 1982 VOL. 1, NO. 15

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Cover/Boris Vallejo
artwork © 1982 Boris Vallejo

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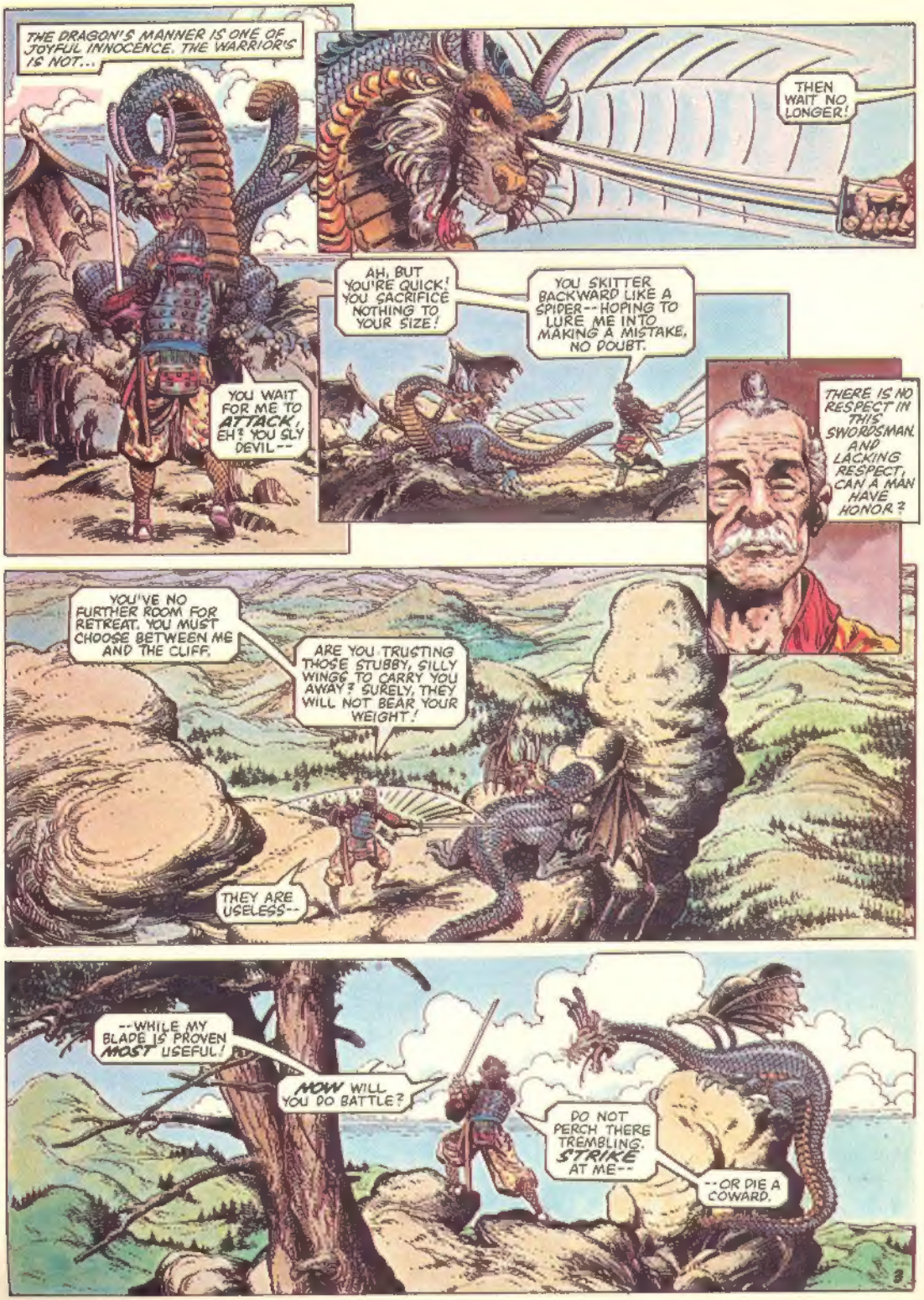
LAST OF THE DRAGONS

CHAPTER ONE:
THE SUNDERING
Last of the Dragons
CREATED & PLOTTED BY CARL POTTS
ART BY CARL POTTS & TERRY AUSTIN
SCRIPT BY DENNY O'NEIL
COLORS BY MARIE SEVERIN
LETTERS BY JIM NOVAK
LOGO: A. JAY
IT IS QUIET IN THE VALLEY-- THE SILENCE, NOT OF EMPTINESS, BUT OF LIVING CREATURES BEING STILL...
THIS IS MORE A PLACE OF ETERNITY THAN OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY; AND SO HE HAS COME HERE TO CONTEMPLATE THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS AND TO SEEK HIS SOUL...
HE COULD NOT HIMSELF SAY WHETHER HE IS RUNNING FROM THE SLAUGHTER AND STRIFE OF HIS VIOLENT PAST, HIS DECADES AS THE MOST RENOWNED SAMURAI OF THE LAND, OR RUNNING TOWARD SOME AS YET UNFATHOMED DESTINY...
A SOUND, DISTANT BUT DRAWING NEAR-- THE THUD OF HOOVES.
HIS PULSE QUICKENS AND HE SEES THE RIDER--
--AN IMAGE FROM HIS YESTERDAYS... A WARRIOR, A SWORDSMAN...
--IN THIS SETTING, OBSCENE AND UGLY...
SOMETHING STIRS IN THE SHADOWS NEAR THE RIDER AND THE OBSERVER KNOWS WHAT IT MUST BE, AND HE BEGINS TO FEAR...

©1982 Carl Potts

--THE DRAGON... AWESOME AS A GOD, CURIOUS AS A CHILD...
...THE HORSE PANICS, AND THE RIDER CRIES--
WHOA!
BUT THE ANIMAL PIVOTS AND BOLTS...
STOP-- OR I'LL FEED YOUR WORTHLESS CARCASS TO THE CARRION.
WHOA, DAMMIT.
WE FIND WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR AND YOU RUN!
THIS IS A RARE OPPORTUNITY--
A HELMET--PREPARATION FOR BATTLE. THE WARRIOR IS NOT GOING IN PEACE.
--FOR GLORY!
THE OBSERVER SIGHS.
IT IS THE KIND OF FOOLISHNESS HE RECOGNIZES.


THE DRAGON'S MANNER IS ONE OF JOYFUL INNOCENCE. THE WARRIOR'S IS NOT...
YOU WAIT FOR ME TO ATTACK, EH? YOU SLY DEVIL--
THEN WAIT NO LONGER!
AH, BUT YOU'RE QUICK! YOU SACRIFICE NOTHING TO YOUR SIZE!
YOU SKITTER BACKWARD LIKE A SPIDER--HOPING TO LURE ME INTO MAKING A MISTAKE, NO DOUBT.
THERE IS NO RESPECT IN THIS SWORDSMAN. AND LACKING RESPECT, CAN A MAN HAVE HONOR?
YOU'VE NO FURTHER ROOM FOR RETREAT. YOU MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN ME AND THE CLIFF.
ARE YOU TRUSTING THOSE STUBBY, SILLY WINGS TO CARRY YOU AWAY? SURELY, THEY WILL NOT BEAR YOUR WEIGHT!
THEY ARE USELESS--
--WHILE MY BLADE IS PROVEN MOST USEFUL!
NOW WILL YOU DO BATTLE?
DO NOT PERCH THERE TREMBLING. STRIKE AT ME--
--OR DIE A COWARD.

YOU INSIST ON COWERING LIKE A WHIPPED DOG.
VERY WELL... YOU'LL BE TREATED AS SUCH.
YOU'RE NOT WORTHY OF STEEL--
--A COMMON STONE IS THE WEAPON FOR YOU.
NO MATTER TO ME NOW I COLLECT MY TROPHY--
--I'M WILLING TO LET THE FALL DO MY WORK.
A HISS... A GLITTERING BLUR... THE SWORDSMAN FEELS THE BLOW BEFORE HE REALIZES THAT THE DRAGON IS AT LAST DEFENDING ITSELF--
HIS BRAVADO WILTS LIKE RICE PAPER IN THE RAIN AND AS HE TURNS, STUMBLING, HIS WORLD IS FILLED WITH THE SIGHT OF FANG AND CLAW...

THE SCALES... HARDER THAN MY BLADE--
A GARDEN POOL-- THAT HAS BEEN THE SPLENDID BEAST'S NATURE UNTIL THIS MOMENT--
--IT HAS SUDDENLY BECOME A STORM.
THE HILT OF THE KATANA SLIPS FROM NUMB FINGERS...
DESPERATELY, HE DRAWS HIS WAKIZASHI AS THE DRAGON'S COLD SHADOW COVERS HIM--
--AND INSTINCT, AIDED BY MALEVOLENT CHANCE, GUIDES IT TO THE SINGLE VULNERABLE SPOT IN THE DRAGON'S SCALED SKIN...
THE SCREAM, THOUGH SILENT, SEEMS TO SHATTER ALL THE VALLEY'S CALM...
FOR A MINUTE, IT THRASHES PITEOUSLY, AND THEN ITS FINAL BREATH CHANGES EVERYTHING...
I DID IT! I SLEW THE DRAGON! I ALONE!
I'LL HAVE MY PRIZE!
GLEEFULLY, HE HACKS, HE SAWS...
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OVERHEAD, THE SUN GLARES IN A PALE MIDDAY SKY AS--
I'VE LABORED FOR MOCARS; BUT IT IS WORTH EVERY DROP OF MY SWEAT.
TONIGHT, HE WILL BOAST OF HIS VICTORY OVER A FIERCE AND RUTHLESS FOE, AND ACCEPT MANY CUPS OF SAKE FROM THE HANDS OF ADMIRING WOMEN...
AS THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN, A VALLEY DWELLER, A VENERABLE SHINTO PRIEST, COMES SEEKING HIS CHARGE--
NO... NO!
--AND FINDS IT...
MY WONDROUS AND GENTLE FRIEND... BUTCHERED--!
HE HEARS THE SCRAPE OF SANDALS...
YOU! YOU DID THIS!
NO. ONCE I MIGHT HAVE, BUT I CAN NO LONGER KILL THAT WHICH I ADMIRE.
WHO ARE YOU?
WHEN I ANSWERED TO A NAME, IT WAS MASANOBU. I SHALL ANSWER TO IT AGAIN.
AND I AM HOKAN.
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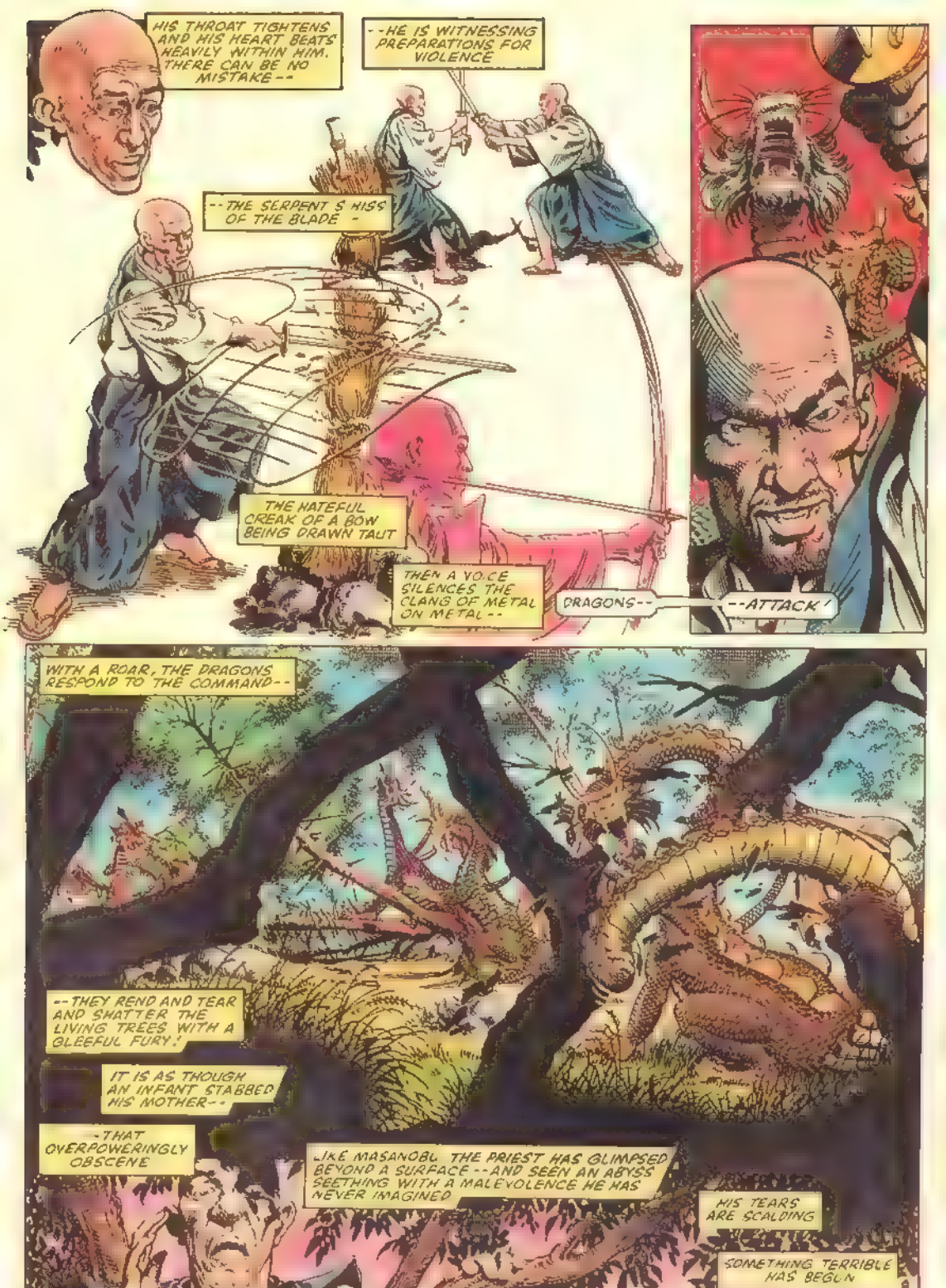
FORGIVE MY RUDENESS. I GRIEVE. MY ORDER IS DEDICATED TO CARING FOR THESE SYMBOLS OF WISDOM AND PEACE...
THESE DRAGONS... I SHARE YOUR GRIEF. WATCHING THIS SPLENDID CREATURE HAS GIVEN ME SOME KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEANINGS I CAME HERE TO FIND.
I HAVE LEARNED FROM THEM OF TOLERANCE, GRACE AND POWER-- THINGS I SOUGHT IN MY DAYS OF COMBAT, IN VAIN.
YET THE SKILLS OF THE SWORDSMAN HAVE THEIR USES. PERHAPS THEY WILL PREVENT UGLINESS FROM OCCURRING A SECOND TIME.
MAY WE MEET AGAIN.
LATER, PERHAPS, MASANOBU WILL KNOW THE GLOW HE NOW FEELS AS INSPIRATION.
A VEIL HAS BEEN MOMENTARILY LIFTED. HE HAS GLIMPSED A TRUTH BEYOND AN APPEARANCE.
YET, IRONICALLY, HE HAS A NEED TO EXPRESS THAT TRUTH--
--AS AN APPEARANCE.
THE BRUSH STROKES ARE SWIFT, THE INK SEEMS TO ARRANGE ITSELF ON THE PARCHMENT.
MEANWHILE, THE PRIEST HAS PAUSED ON HIS WAY BACK TO THE TEMPLE, CURIOUS ABOUT SOUNDS HE IS HEARING.
HE SEES SEVERAL OF HIS FELLOW MONKS ENGAGED IN WEAPONS PRACTICE--
--SEVERAL MORE SHARPENING THE TEETH AND CLAWS OF DRAGONS.


HIS THROAT TIGHTENS AND HIS HEART BEATS HEAVILY WITHIN HIM. THERE CAN BE NO MISTAKE--
--HE IS WITNESSING PREPARATIONS FOR VIOLENCE
--THE SERPENT'S HISS OF THE BLADE--
THE HATEFUL CREAK OF A BOW BEING DRAWN TAUT
THEN A VOICE SILENCES THE CLANG OF METAL ON METAL--
DRAGONS--
--ATTACK!
WITH A ROAR, THE DRAGONS RESPOND TO THE COMMAND--
--THEY REND AND TEAR AND SHATTER THE LIVING TREES WITH A GLEEFUL FURY!
IT IS AS THOUGH AN INFANT STABBED HIS MOTHER--
--THAT OVERPOWERINGLY OBSCENE
LIKE MASANOBU, THE PRIEST HAS GLIMPSED BEYOND A SURFACE--AND SEEN AN ABYSS SEETHING WITH A MALEVOLENCE HE HAS NEVER IMAGINED
HIS TEARS ARE SCALDING
SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAS BEGUN
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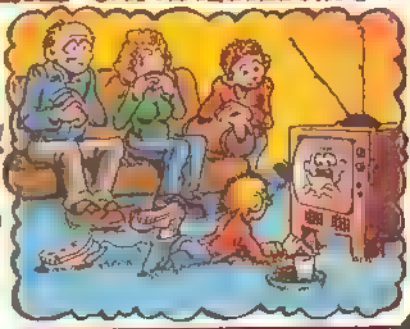
THE LAST OF THE DRAGONS continues next issue

PATRIOT

BRRR!..MOTHER OF CHRIST!.. ITS REALLY FREEZIN' TONIGHT!.(CHATTER) MAN!.. DO I HATE GUARD DUTY ON NIGHTS LIKE THIS!..(WHUFF-SLAP-WHUFF)

...EVEN THE FUKKIN' ALIENS WOULDNT START AN INVASION ONNA NIGHT LIKE THIS!.(GRUMBLE)... WONDER HOWCUM THEY STARTED THIS GODDAM WAR ANYHOW?.. I MEAN, BACK WHEN THE UNITED NATIONS FIRST SAID THEY WAS IN CONTACT WITH CREATURES FROM OUTER SPACE, OUR OLD MAMA EARTH WAS IN AWFUL SORRY SHAPE! ... THERE WAS WARS AN' THREATS OF WARS ON THE TEE-VEE ALLA TIME...(I WAS JUST A PUPPY KID BACK THEN SO'S I WAS WATCHIN' LOTS OF TELLYVISON)...AND THEN THERE WAS POLLUTION AN' INFLATION AN' FUEL SHORTAGES ...JEEZE!.. I REALLY CAN'T UNNERSTAN' WHY THEM ALIENS FIGGERED WE HAD ANYTHING WORTH CONQUERING!...BUT, IT COULDN'TA BEEN MORE'N A COUPLE MONTHS LATER THAT THE U.N. ANNOUNCED TO THE WHOLE WORLD THEY HAD SOLID PROOF THEM FUKKIN' ALIENS WAS PLANNING TO INVADE EARTH!.. I CAN REMEMBER MY MOM AN' DAD...(SNIFF)...BLESS THEIR HEARTS... WAS REAL SCAIRT...HELL... EVERYBODY WAS FEELIN' FRIGHTENED I GUESS... AFTER ALL, WE WERE COMPLETELY UNPROTECTED!... BUT OUR LEADERS CAME THROUGH FAST!.. THEY STARTED A CRASH PROGRAM OF WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT TRYING TO PROTECT OUR HELPLESS LITTLE PLANET! ...THAT MUSTA BEEN WHEN MY DAD WAS DRAFTED...YEAH.. THATS RIGHT...AND TWO YEARS LATER MY MOM WAS PICKED FOR THA NEW WIMMENS MARINE CORP



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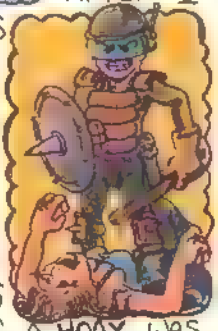
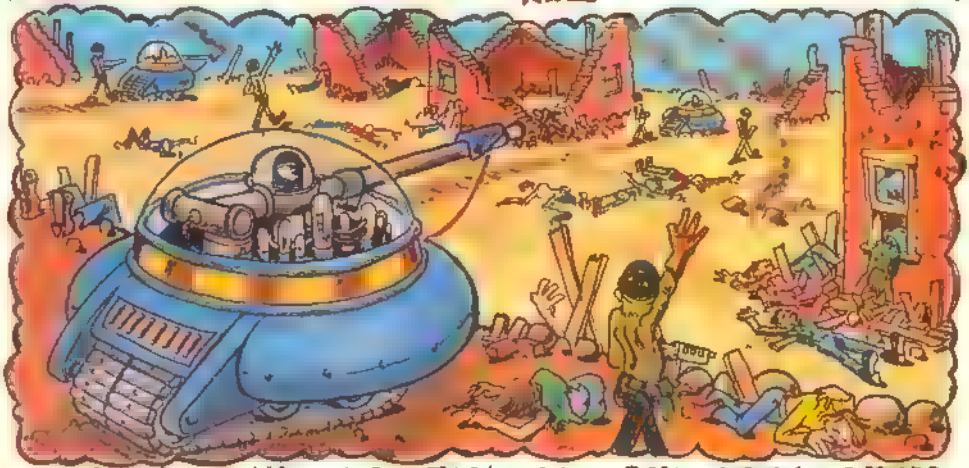
...IT WAS JUST ME AN' MY **OLDER BROTHER** AFTER THAT... EVEN THOUGH WE WAS ALL **ALONE**, WE MADE OUT **OK**... WE HAD **GOOD JOBS** IN THE **DEFENCE FACTORIES** ...CHUCKLE... WE EVEN MANAGED TA HAVE SOME **GOOD TIMES**... UNTIL MY **BROTHER** TURNED **FIFTEEN**... THAT WAS THE **LEGAL DRAFT AGE** BACK THEN... I **NEVER SAW HIM** AFTER THAT.. I **HEARD** ONCE HE GOT A **SILVER MEDAL** FOR BEIN' A **HERO**... YEAH... DAT WOULD BE **LIKE** MY **BRO'** AWRIGHT!... (HEE-HEE)... I WANTED TO BE **OUT THERE** WITH **HIM** SO **BAD** I EVEN USED HIS **I.D.** TO **ENLIST** IN THE **ARMY** WHEN I WAS ONLY **THIRTEEN!**.. MAN!... I COULDN'T **WAIT** TA **KILL** ME **SOME** OF THEM **FUKKIN' ALIENS!**.. POW-**BOOM**.. **WOO-HA!** (SIGH).. BUT I **NEVER** GOT THE **CHANCE** TA DO REAL **HAND** TA **HAND** WITH THOSE **SLIMY CRITTERS** CAUSE' JUST A LITTLE WHILE AFTER I **JOINED**, THE **NEW WORLD GOVERNMENT** SAID OUR **DEFENSES** WAS **STRONG** ENUFF TO MAKE THE **INVADERS** THINK **TWICE** BEFORE THEY'D **ATTACK** US... BUT WE KEPT THE **WEAPONS FACTORIES CRANKING** ANYHOW... WE WASN'T ABOUT TA LET OUR **GUARD DOWN** EVER AGAIN ...**NO SIR!**.. AN OUR **LEADERS** WAS **RIGHT**... A WHOLE **BUNCH** OF **YEARS** WENT BY **WITHOUT** ANY **SIGN** OF THEM **INVADERS!** ... THEN A **PROBLEM** POPPED-UP THAT **NOBODY** COULD HAVE FORSEEN... **HUGE ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS** STARTED TO **CAUSE** REAL **TROUBLE!**... SOME OF THEM **GODDAMN PEACE FREAKS** WAS EVEN **SAYIN'** THE **WHOLE INVASION** WAS A **HOAX!** CAN YA **IMAGINE** THAT?... I MEAN... **WHY** WOULD OUR

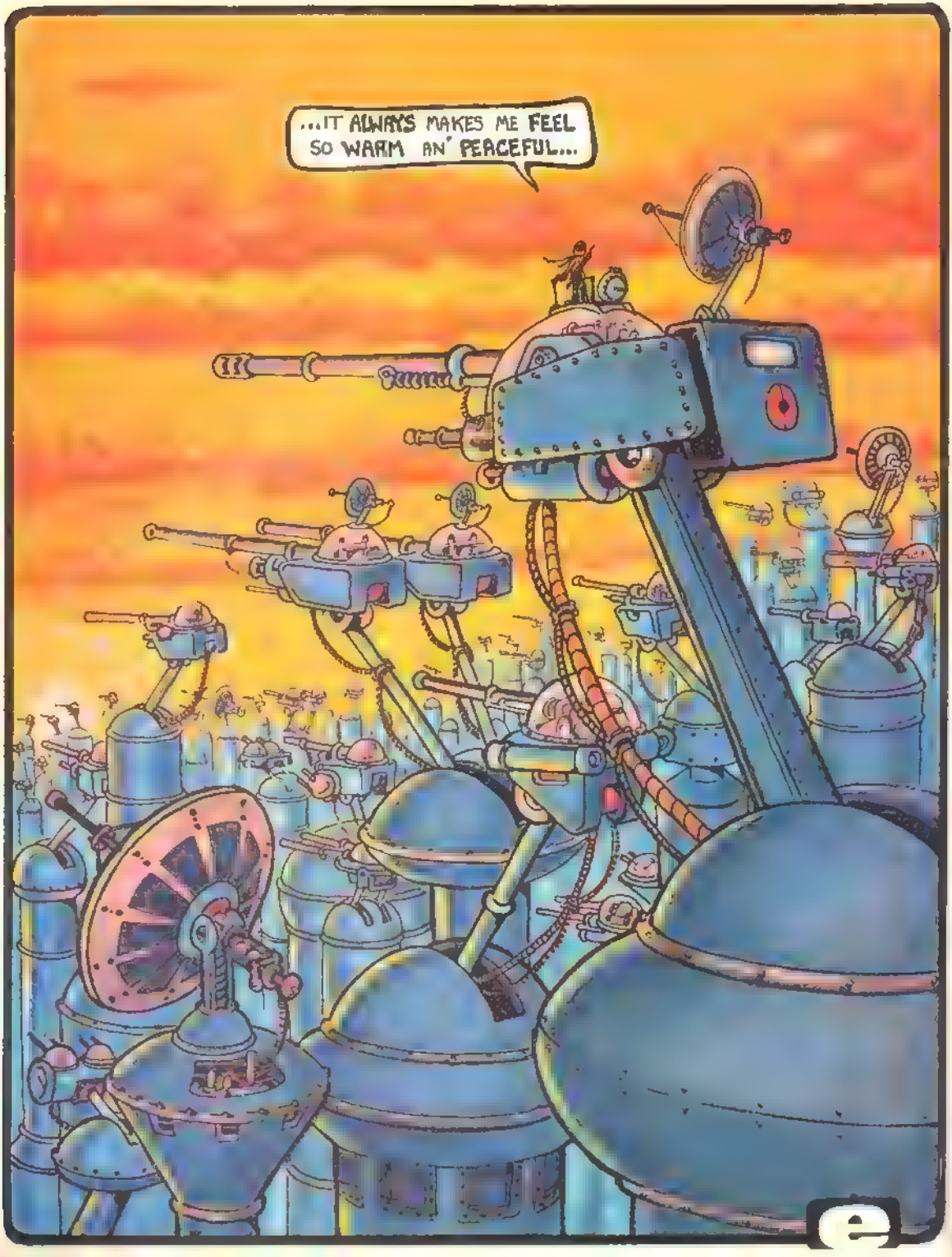
GOVERNMENT WANNA FAKE SOMETHIN LIKE THAT?... HUK-HUK... AT LEAST I GOT TO BUST SOME OF THEIR FUZZY HEADS AFTER I JOINED DA MILITARY POLICE... THEM DEMONSTRATIONS WENT ON FOR A LITTLE WHILE BUT THEY DIDN'T LAST ... THEM PUNKS JUST WASN'T EQUIPPED TO FIGHT TRAINED RIOT COPS... AN BESIDES... THE WARTIME ECONOMY WAS REALLY GREAT ... EVERYBODY HAD JOBS AND FOOD AN' STUFF... SO THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE WASN'T ABOUT TO LET A BUNCH A LOUDMOUTHS UPSET THE APPLE-CART... ANYWAYS ... THEM DUMB RUMORS ABOUT THE INVASION BEING A HOAX WAS PRETTY MUCH FORGOTTON IN THEM GREAT DEBATES OVER LETTIN' COMPUTERS CONTROL ALL OUR DEFENSES IT WAS A REAL HARD PILL TA SWALLOW WHEN THE COMPUTERS BEGAN FULL AUTOMATION OF ALL THE WEAPONS FACTORIES AND CLOSED DOWN THE FARMS IN FAVOR OF ARMORED FOOD TANKS BUT WE WAS MUCH SAFER FROM AN ATTACK! ... I WAS A CAPTAIN BY THEN, HEAD OF INTERNAL SECURITY . I HADDA ORDER MY MEN TA BUST SOME MORE GODDAM HEADS!.. I HATED TA DO IT... BUT THEM IGNORANT FACTORY WORKERS JUST WOULDN'T ADMIT THAT THOSE ELECTRONICAL BRAINS COULD DEFEND US BETTER THAN WE COULD!... THEY WAS ALWAYS WORRYING ABOUT JOBS AN' HOMES ...HAH... LIKE THAT CRAP WOULD BE WORTH ANYTHING AFTER THEM FUKKIN ALIENS ATTACKED!.. BUT THEY WOULDN'T LISTEN... AND IT ALMOST TURNED INTO A GODDAM CIVIL WAR!... THOUSANDS OF



PEOPLE DIED IN THEM AWFUL BLOODY CONFRONTATIONS WITH THE POLICE AN ARMY... THERE WAS SO DAMN MANY OF THEM THAT IT LOOKED LIKE THEY WAS EVEN GONNA WIN!... UNTIL WE STARTED USING THEM COMPUTERS TO DIRECT OUR ATTACKS... THEN THOSE DUMB REBELS DINT STAND A CHANCE... WE WIPED EM OUT TO THE LAST MAN..



...I GUESS WE HAD TOO... THEY WAS A REAL THREAT TA WORLD SECURITY!... HMM... THAT WAS THE LAST TIME I SEEN ACTION... ...JESUS!... THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO!... AFTER AWHILE YA LOSE TRACK OF TIME WHEN YER ALL ALONE... NOT THAT I'M COMPLAININ'... I'M LUCKY THE COMPUTERS SENT ME UP HERE... TO THE SURFACE... PROBABLY A REWARD FOR ALL MY YEARS OF GOOD SERVICE... GIVING ME A CHANCE TA FIGHT THEM FUKKIN' ALIENS FACE TO FACE... I SURE HOPE I GET TO FIGHT AN INVADER... SIGH... AFTER ALL THESE YEARS I STILL HAVENT SEEN A INVADER.. ..COMES TA THINK OF IT... I HAVENT SEEN ANY PEOPLE FOR AWHILE... YAWN (SMAK-SMAK)... I SURE HOPE IT WASNT A HOAX... HEY!.. LOOKA DAT... ITS SUNRISE!... HOT DAMN!... I JUST LOVES TO SEE A MORNING SUN SHINING IN THE SKY...


...IT ALWAYS MAKES ME FEEL SO WARM AN' PEACEFUL...

Mali's Revenge
— Lleh's II —
MALI SWIMS FOR HER LIFE IN THE SPACE OF AN INSTANT WHAT WAS AN EXULTING GROUP HAS TURNED TO DEATH AND CARNAGE BEHIND HER SEA HORSE STEEDS DIE AS HER SISTER RAIDERS TOWARD THE SURFACE, THE VERY EDGE OF THE LLEH'S
WITH NO OTHER OPTION OPEN MALI SEEKS SAFETY IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION
PAN SURGES THE FRAGILE EEL FURTHER INTO THE MIDNIGHT DEPTHS ONLY A TENUOUS PLUME OF BLOOD SHOWS WHERE SHE GOES
SECONDS AFTER FINDING REFUGE IN A CAVERNOUS RECESS, MALI IS SUDDENLY GRIPPED BY MORE THAN FEAR

art and characters ©1982 John Bolton/story ©1982 Graham Marks and John Bolton

OH, MY GOD
W-WHAT--?!

A DEEP, YET FEMININE VOICE ECHOES AROUND THE CAVE
HELLO, SWEET THING, ARE WE IN TROUBLE? DO TELL CEPHALA... OH, MY DEAR DEAR! DID THAT VILE DEMAID DO THIS TO YOU? YOUR WOUND HAS ALL THE ROUGH ARTISTRY OF HER VERY BASIC TALENTS.
YOU KNOW THE DEMAID? OW! THAT HURTS
I'LL BE VERY GENTLE. YES, I DO KNOW THAT DISGUSTING AMPHIBIAN AND I ALSO KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO NEED MY HELP
I DON'T NEED ANY- AAAH THAT'S NICE!
BUT THIS IS NICER...
I DON'T WANT YOUR HELP NOW LEAVE ME ALONE
SUDDENLY THE PLACID WATERS OUTSIDE THE CAVERN PULSE AND SHIVER AN UNHOLY ROAR FILLS MALI'S EARS
YOU SPOKE TOO SOON, DEAR SHE'S SMELLED YOUR BLOOD. SHE'S HUNGRY!

I'M TRAPPED! WHAT CAN I--
DON'T PANIC, MY LOVELY. JUST DO EXACTLY WHAT I SAY...
WITH CEPHALA'S INSTRUCTIONS TURNING OVER AND OVER IN HER MIND, AND THE RAZOR-SHARP CORAL KNIFE TURNING IN HER FIST, MALI WEAVES THROUGH SWAYING SEA WEED TOWARD THE DEMAID!
FROM HER HIDING PLACE BENEATH HER RAVENOUS PURSUER MALI POWERS UPWARD IN A GRACEFUL, DEADLY CURVE. AT ITS APEX... HER KNIFE SLASHES THE SOFT BELLY OF HER FOE!
INSTANTLY SHE FALLS BACK TOWARD THE PROTECTIVE CUSTODY OF AN INKY-BLACK CLOUD RISING FROM BELOW. CEPHALA'S SMOKE SCREEN

B. NDED BY THE DARK CLOUD ALL THE PRIM T VE DEMA D CAN SENSE IS BLOOD FOOD! IMPULS VELY SHE TEARS AT THE SOURCE
WITH ONE LAST LOOK, MAL USES THE SWIRLING CLOAK OF BLACKNESS TO ESCAPE BOTH THE CREATURES WHO HAVE DESIGNS ON HER FUTURE.
K LLED BY HER OWN GREED AVENGED BY HER OWN PRIMORDAL INSTINCTS, THE DEMAID SINKS TO THE OCEAN FLOOR HER L FE BLOOD M X NG IN A FOUL BREW WITH CEPHALAS' DARK FLUID
MY SWEET SHE'S DEAD YOU CAN COME OUT NOW, MY SWEET
B. T MAL HAS ANOTHER REUNION IN MIND

AS SHE WALKS TOWARD THE EDGE--THAT AREA LONG FORBIDDEN TO ALL LEHS--MALI HAS BUT ONE FEAR...SHE WILL NOT FIND HER SISTER.
HER CALLING BRINGS NO ANSWER, BUT HER WANDERING SOON DOES
ANIIIR.!!
MALI'S GRIEVING COMES TO A SUDDEN HALT AS IT IS REPLACED BY THE CERTAINTY THAT THIS STATUESQUE SURFACE DWELLER MUST BE THE ONE WHO KILLED HER SISTER

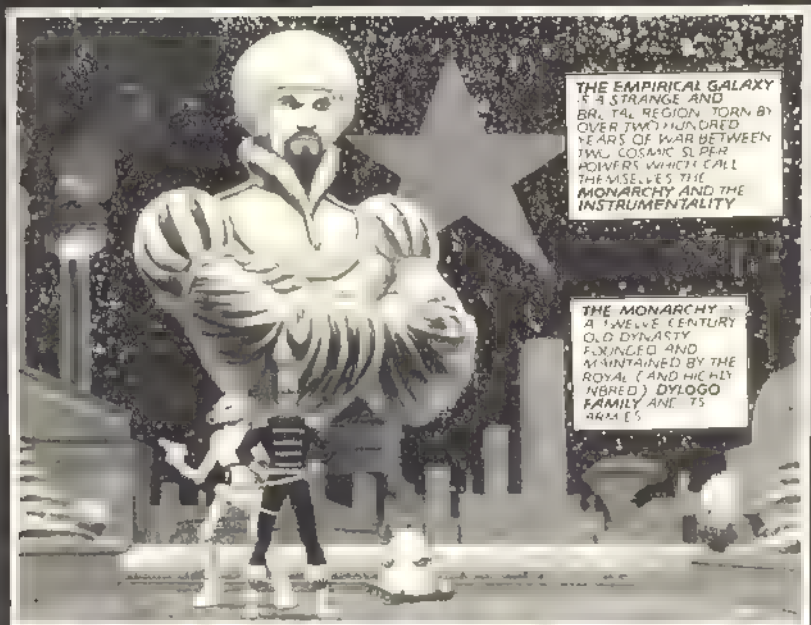
RAGE AND THE NEED FOR REVENGE FEED HER TIRED BODY AS MALI RETURNS TO HER OWN WORLD RETURNS TO SEEK THE HELP OF
...CEPHALA!
YOU'VE COME BACK, MY SWEET! I THOUGHT YOU'D LEFT. I THOUGHT--
I WANTED TO GET YOU A GIFT FOR SAVING MY LIFE. COME SEE WHAT I'VE FOUND FOR YOU!
CEPHALA HAD NEVER SEEN ANYTHING SO BIG.. SO PERFECT
IT'S JUST WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED!
TAKE IT, CEPHALA! TAKE IT IT'S YOURS!

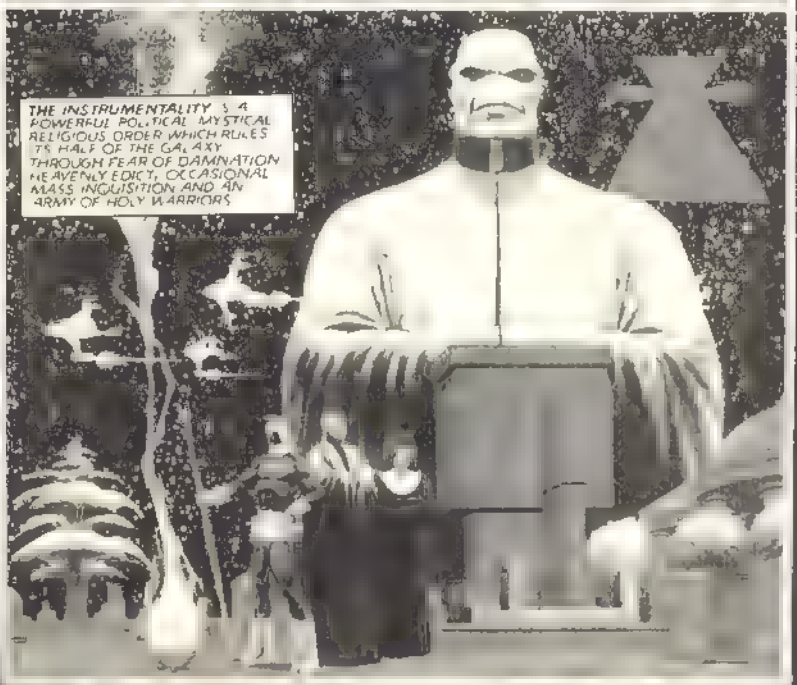
IN THE LAST FEW MINUTES OF HER LIFE, THE GIRL FELT NOTHING BUT THE SMOOTH WATER, WARM AGAINST HER SKIN.
SHE SAW NOTHING BUT THE SLOW RED EVENING SKY. THEN ..
IN THE LAST FEW SECONDS OF HER LIFE, ALL SHE FELT WAS CEPHALA'S LUSTFUL, LOVING EMBRACE
THE SEDUCTION IS TERMINAL. MALI'S REVENGE IS COMPLETE...

...BUT SO NOW IS CEPHALA'S AWARENESS!
A TRICK! SOMEHOW YOU KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN... YOU WANTED IT TO! YOU SCHEMING UNGRATEFUL LITTLE LLEH--
--YOU'VE USED ME ONCE TOO OFTEN.
AGAIN, MAL SWIMS FOR HER LIFE, SEEKING THE SANCTUARY OF THE COLD BLUE DEPTHS AGAIN, SHE IS PURSUED. BUT THIS TIME, IT IS NOT HUNGER THAT MAKES HER THE PREY BUT A LOVER'S THWARTED PASSION. A LOVER NOW JUST AS SET ON VENGEANCE AS MAL WAS

WELCOME TO THE EMPIRICAL GALAXY, HOME OF VANTH...

DREADSTAR

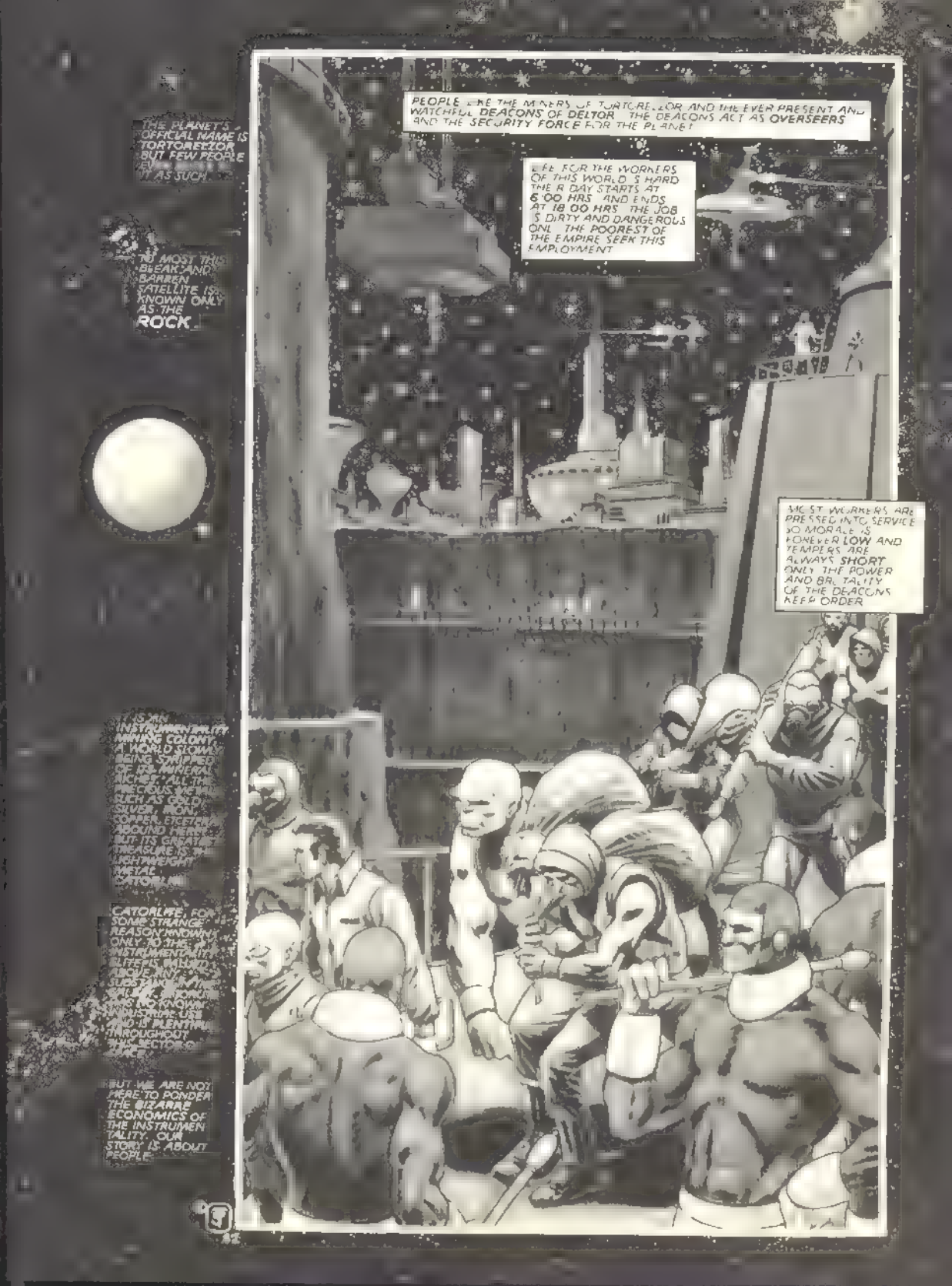

THE EMPIRICAL GALAXY IS A STRANGE AND BRUTAL REGION TORN BY OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF WAR BETWEEN TWO COSMIC SUPER POWERS WHICH CALL THEMSELVES THE MONARCHY AND THE INSTRUMENTALITY
THE MONARCHY IS A TWELVE CENTURY OLD DYNASTY FOUNDED AND MAINTAINED BY THE ROYAL (AND HIGHLY INBRED) DYLOGO FAMILY AND ITS ARMIES


THE INSTRUMENTALITY IS A POWERFUL POLITICAL MYSTICAL RELIGIOUS ORDER WHICH RULES ITS HALF OF THE GALAXY THROUGH FEAR OF DAMNATION HEAVENLY EDICT, OCCASIONAL MASS INQUISITION AND AN ARMY OF HOLY WARRIORS

THE GREAT WAR BROKE OUT WHEN THE TWO SUPERPOWERS EACH LAID CLAIM TO A SMALL WORLD NAMED NIMBUS SEEING AS BOTH GOVERNMENTS HAD GOD AND THE MIGHT OF SEVERAL HUNDRED WORLDS ON THEIR SIDE THEY DECIDED THE ONLY WAY TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE WAS ALL OUT WAR

OVER THE LAST TWO CENTURIES THE TWO GIANT EMPIRES HAVE CONTINUED THE CONFLICT BUT HAVE ADJUSTED TO ITS EXISTENCE. ONLY THE OUTER PLANETS EVER REALLY BECOME INVOLVED IN THE WAR. FOR THE INNER PLANETS, IT'S BUSINESS AS USUAL EXCEPT FOR THE OCCASIONAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF A VICTORY OR DISASTER IN ONE OF THE OUTER

BUT ONE LONE MAN HAS COME TO THIS STRANGE GALAXY AND SWORN TO PUT AN END TO THIS MADNESS. HIS NAME IS VANTH DREADSTAR


THE PLANET'S OFFICIAL NAME IS TORTOREZOR BUT FEW PEOPLE EV... IT AS SUCH
...MOST THIS BREAK-AND-BARREN SATELLITE IS KNOWN ONLY AS THE ROCK
PEOPLE LIKE THE MINERS OF TORTOREZOR AND THE EVER PRESENT AND WATCHFUL DEACONS OF DELTOR THE DEACONS ACT AS OVERSEERS AND THE SECURITY FORCE FOR THE PLANET
LIFE FOR THE WORKERS OF THIS WORLD IS HARD THE R DAY STARTS AT 6:00 HRS AND ENDS AT 18:00 HRS THE JOB IS DIRTY AND DANGEROUS ONL THE POOREST OF THE EMPIRE SEEK THIS EMPLOYMENT
MOST WORKERS ARE PRESSED INTO SERVICE SO MORALE IS FOREVER LOW AND TEMPERS ARE ALWAYS SHORT ONLY THE POWER AND BRUTALITY OF THE DEACONS KEEP ORDER
...IS AN INSTRUMENTALITY MINING COLONY A WORLD SLOWLY BEING STRIPPED OF ITS MINERAL RICHES ALL THE PRECIOUS METALS SUCH AS GOLD, SILVER, IRON, COPPER, ETCETERA AROUND HERE BUT ITS GREATEST INSTRUMENTALITY HEAVYWEIGHT METAL ...CATORLITE
...CATORLITE, FOR SOME STRANGE REASON KNOWN ONLY TO THE INSTRUMENTALITIES LIFEFORMS AND MACHINES ALIKE, IS ESSENTIAL TO ALL SUBSTANCE ABUSE KNOWN TO MAN AND IS KNOWN ONLY TO EXIST IN ABUNDANCE ON THIS PLANETOID THROUGHOUT THE SECTOR
BUT WE ARE NOT HERE TO PONDER THE BIZARRE ECONOMICS OF THE INSTRUMENTALITY. OUR STORY IS ABOUT PEOPLE.
5

WORK CREW #7 BEGINS ITS SHIFT
THE MEN LISTLESSLY HEAD TOWARD THEIR DAY'S LABOR. THEY STARE BLANKLY AHEAD, CAREFUL TO AVOID ANY EYE CONTACT THAT MIGHT PROVOKE A BEATING FROM THE ILL TEMPERED DEACONS
ONLY TWO WORKERS LAGGING TOWARD THE BACK OF THE CREW SEEM FREE FROM THIS CURSE
THEIR EYES ROAM FREELY EXAMINING PROBING SEEKING FAMILIAR LANDMARKS AND PASSAGEWAYS
FOR THEM, LINES AND MARKS ON SECRET MAPS ARE BECOMING THE REALITY OF STONE
BUT THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE ROCK IS NOT THEIR SOLE CONCERN
THEY CLOSELY SCRUTINIZE THE PLANET'S HIGHLY EFFICIENT MINING OPERATION
THEY WONDER AT AND ABOUT THE STRANGE GIANT BATTERY OF COMMUNICATION BEAMERS AND RECEIVERS.
BUT THEIR SHARPEST INTEREST IS FOCUSED ON THE MASSIVE SPACE TRAWLERS WHICH PERIODICALLY TAKE OFF, HEAVILY LADEN WITH THE SPOILS OF THE ROCK
AND THE ARMY OF SECURITY GUARDS WHICH PEPPER THE LANDSCAPE
FORTUNATELY THE LOWER LEVELS OF THE MINE TEND TO HAVE FEWER DEACONS ON DUTY

SO ON SUB LEVEL #9, WORK CREW #7 LOSES TWO OF ITS MEMBERS.
YOU SURE THIS IS THE RIGHT WAY?
I THINK SO, ODY. THIS TUNNEL SHOULD LEAD US TO A LADDER THAT WILL GET US TO THE HANGAR DECK.
I SURE HOPE SO
THIS PLACE IS FILTHY WITH INSTY' DEACONS JUST LOOKING FOR WORKERS WHO AREN'T WHERE THEY BELONG WHAT WE OUGHT eh?
COME ON, VANTH. WE HAVEN'T GOT ALL DAY WHAT'S WRONG?
OH I SEE
SHE DOES LOOK A LOT LIKE DELILAH, DOESN'T SHE?
BUT WE HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR ANY MOONING RIGHT NOW
WE CAME TO DO A JOB, AND TIME'S A WASTING
YES OF COURSE
LET'S GET RID OF THESE TOOLS
GOOD IDEA LESS WEIGHT MORE SPEED
WITH A LITTLE LUCK WE SHOULD REACH ULP!
WELL SO MUCH FOR A LITTLE LUCK
HEY! YOU WORKERS DON'T BELONG AT THIS WORK STATION WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
WE SORT OF GOT LOST SIR
YOU SURE YOU'RE JUST NOT MALINGERING? WE DON'T LIKE GOOF OFFS AROUND HERE
NO REALLY WE'RE JUST A LITTLE LOST
WELL, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO JUST CHECK ON THAT YOU'LL HAVE TO COME TO SECURITY CENTRAL WITH US

I'M AFRAID YOUR HOLINESS, THAT WE'VE NEITHER THE TIME NOR ANY DESIRE TO ACCOMPANY YOU.
OH, YEAH?! WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT ANY CHOICE IN THE MATTER?
THIS!
SUDDENLY THERE IS THE CRACKLE OF ENERGY AND A STRANGE GLOWING SWORD APPEARS
DEATH FLAMES FROM THE BLADE AND FINDS ITS MARK
DEATH FLAMES FROM THE DEACON'S BATON BUT FAILS TO REACH ITS MARK
THE SWORD SNATCHES THE BATON'S FIERY RAYS FROM THE VERY AIR
I'LL HANDLE THIS LAST ONE VANTH
OEDI! WATCH HIS BATON! HIS SHOTS ARE GOING

TO HIT THE SUPPORT BEAMS!
RUN FOR IT!
CAVE-IN!!
THE EARTH SHAKES THE WORLD COLLAPSES THE HEAVENS ROAR FOR HOURS WEEKS YEARS LIFETIMES!
WITHIN SECONDS IT'S OVER THE DUST SETTLES ALL IS QUIET STILL AS THE TOMB IT HAS BECOME
FOR SOME, BUT NOT ALL
DAMN
OEDI!
WHERE ARE YOU?!

continues on page 6

SYNOPSIS

Captain Rotwang, an alien who hunts whales across the reaches of space, has kidnapped two earthmen marine biologist *John Isaac* and submarine commander *Falco*—and forced them to join his oddly assorted crew

To prepare the prisoners for duty, Rotwang turns them over to his ship's surgeon's, enormous insects known as the *Xlexu*. The Xlexu strip Isaac of his skin, replacing it with a transparent membrane suited to the atmosphere within which he must now work In addition, they join the two sides of his brain, separate in most humans, giving him the ability to generate and release an immensely powerful *aura*. In cryptic remarks, the Xlexu refer to the aura as Isaac's "new self", and advise him to awaken into it

Falco has been decapitated, his body accidentally destroyed, and his intellect and emotions trapped within his head

In response to threats and promises from Rotwang, Isaac uses his aura to draw *Abraxas*—the great red whale which is Rotwang's nemesis—to Rotwang's ship Pandemonium ensues when the whale attacks, and many of the crew are killed. Most of the remainder, excluding Isaac's friend *Sphinx* and Falco, mutiny, and Rotwang—doubly strained by his latest defeat against Abraxas and by the revelation that he has been a pawn of the Xlexu all along—has a nervous breakdown

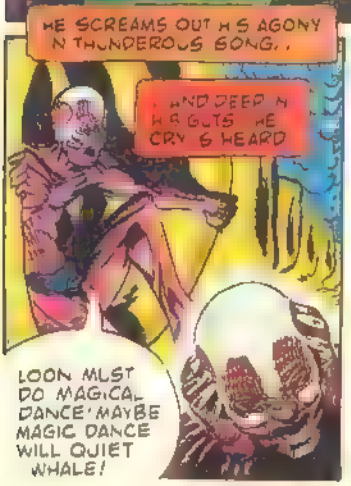
Meanwhile, Isaac, flung into Abraxas's maw during the battle, must cope with another enormous shock—he is not the first earthman to be altered and left inside the whale by the insects to "find his self'

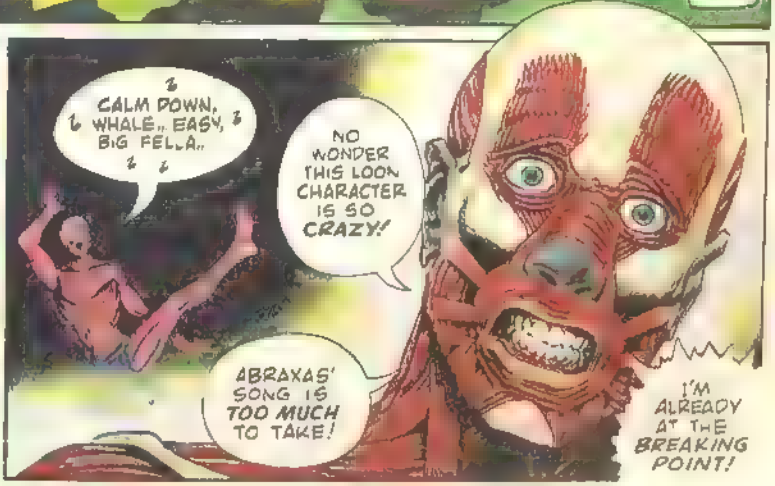
ABRAXAS AND THE EARTHMAN

written and illustrated
by
RICK VEITCH

THE SELF

IMPACT! MOUNTAIN RANGES RISE AND FALL AS THE WHALE PLANET QUAKES UNDER EACH REPEATED CONCUSSION...
ABRAXAS IS MAD WITH PAIN!
PAIN SO EXCRUCIATING AND PROLONGED THAT THE GREAT RED'S ONLY RELIEF IS THAT OF MORE PAIN!
BAREEEEN
©1982 FEITCH


HE SCREAMS OUT HIS AGONY IN THUNDEROUS SONG...
...AND DEEP IN HIS GUTS HE CRY'S HEARD
LOON MUST DO MAGICAL DANCE! MAYBE MAGIC DANCE WILL QUIET WHALE!


CALM DOWN, WHALE... EASY, BIG FELLA...
NO WONDER THIS LOON CHARACTER IS SO CRAZY!
ABRAXAS' SONG IS TOO MUCH TO TAKE!
I'M ALREADY AT THE BREAKING POINT!

UNDER EXTREME STRESS ISAAC'S AURA SEPARATES FROM HIS BODY AS IT HAS TWICE BEFORE--
BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER...
HIS CONSCIOUS MIND GOES WITH IT!
GOOD LORD! THIS IS IT!
THIS IS WHAT THE XLEXU MEANT BY AWAKENING INTO MY TRUE SELF!
FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF THE AWAKENED SELF, REALITY IS QUITE DIFFERENT...
I'M NOT FULLY FORMED YET...
BUT HERE I CAN SEE ABRAXAS' PAIN AS A RIP IN THE HARMONIC BALANCE OF EXISTENCE!
AND I THINK I CAN RELIEVE THAT PAIN...
ISAAC RELEASES TONGUES OF LIVING AURIC ENERGY TO LICK THE WOUND...
AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT!

INDEED, THE MADDENED BEAST'S IMMEDIATE SUFFERING IS EASED..
HE BEGINS TO SOOTHE..
AND THE PLANET ITSELF SIGHS IN RELIEF!
NOT FAR AWAY, THE SURVIVORS OF SHIPWRECK AND MUTINY SIFT THROUGH THE SCORCHED RUINS OF THE YORRIKKE...
AHH, SHE WAS A BEAUTIFUL SHIP--THE BEST IN THE WHOLE DAMN FLEET!
BUT NOW THE RED WHALE'S HAD HIS WAY WITH HER. AND POOR CAPTAIN ROTWANG, TOO...
HERE N MY HAND DO I HOLD HIS DEATH..
IT'S QUITE A JOLT TO SEE YOUR SHIP SUNK OUT FROM UNDER YOU, EH, ROTWANG?
AT LEAST YOU COULD TAKE IT LIKE A MAN!
SHUT THAT GOB BEFORE I NAIL IT SHUT FOR YE, FALCO!
I DON'T CARE IF HE HAS LOST HIS MARBLES, HE'S STILL ME LORD AND MASTER AND I'LL SEE HE TAKES NO LIP!
I'M UNDER SPHINX'S PROTECTION, STAUB!
AHHH, HER AND HER BLEEDIN' HEART! I THINK THE XLEXU TOOK HER LAST LITTER AWAY TOO SOON!
STAUB! COME QUICK!
BRING FALCO AND ROTWANG!
I HOPE IT'S A BIT OF FOOD YE'VE FOUND US, GIRL--
MY BELLY'S AS EMPTY AS NEVERSWEAT'S SENSE OF DUTY!
SORRY, STAUB, IT'S NOTHING TO EAT...
..BUT IT MIGHT JUST BE SOMETHING WE NEED EVEN MORE...
..A WAY OFF THIS PLANET!

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE WHALE, ISAAC HAS RETURNED TO HIS PHYSICAL BODY, ONLY TO FIND..
SORRY SELF BUT LOON HAS LOOKED LONG AND HARD FOR YOU--SO NOW LOON CANNOT LET SELF ESCAPE!
UNTIE ME, LOON!
YOU CAN'T DO THIS!
LOON MUST BRING SELF TO SHOW OTHERS!
OTHERS? YOU MEAN THERE ARE MORE LIKE YOU?
LIKE US!
ALL BROUGHT FROM EARTH ON WHALERS--ALL DROPPED INTO ABRAXAS BY INSECTS TO FIND SELF!
BUT NONE COULD FIND YOU, SELF!
UNTIL TODAY! LOON HAS FOUND SELF! LOON IS CLEVEREST OF ALL!
THERE'S NO USE TRYING TO ARGUE WITH HIM. HE'S COMPLETELY OFF HIS ROCKER!
MIGHT AS WELL JUST LET HIM TAKE ME TO THESE OTHERS! MAYBE WE CAN ALL FIGURE OUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH ABRAXAS!
IF THINGS GET TOO DANGEROUS I CAN ALWAYS AWAKEN INTO THE SELF AGAIN. I HOPE!
THIS PART CAN GET A LITTLE HAIRY!
RELAX AND ENJOY VIEW, SELF! HEY, LOON DOESN'T LET JUST ANYONE RIDE N HIS BOAT!
OOOP! HANG ON!

LOON SOMEHOW GUIDES THE MAKESHIFT CRAFT DOWN A ROLLERCOASTER OF FOAMING RAPIDS...
...UNTIL THEY BURST INTO THE SECOND STOMACH CHAMBER OF THE WHALE!
LOON-- THIS OLD DERELICT IS PIERCING ABRAXAS IN A SCORE OF PLACES!
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN HERE?
LONG TIME... LONGER THAN ANY OF US CAN REMEMBER!
IT NEVER SEEMS TO DIGEST LIKE THE OTHERS!
THAT'S BECAUSE THE WHALING SHIPS ARE ONLY WOOD!
THIS BABY IS A PRODUCT OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY! IT'S CONSTRUCTED OF VERY DENSE METAL!
UNGH! THIS IS BAD PART! NOT HEALTHY TO HANG AROUND HERE!
ANOTHER SURE SIGN OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY-- CHEMICAL WASTE! SOMETHING WE'RE ALL TOO FAMILIAR WITH BACK ON EARTH!
THERE MUST BE TONS OF IT LEAKING INTO ABRAXAS' DIGESTIVE TRACT! THIS IS WHAT HE'S SCREAMING ABOUT!
MEANWHILE, THE CASTAWAYS HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THE TRAIL OF FOOTPRINTS.
TAKE A LOOK, CAP'N... WOULDN'T THAT HERD HAVE KEPT US BUSY IN THE OLD DAYS?
TILL HE SPOUTS BLACK BLOOD AND ROLLS FIN OUT.
THEY SAY THE WHALES OF EARTH SWIM IN THE SEA...?
IT'S TRUE! I NEVER REALIZED HOW BEAUTIFUL A WHALE COULD BE UNTIL I SAW ONE IN FLIGHT...
ZZIIISH

OH, RIDGE... CAN'T YOU PUT THAT GUN AWAY AND COME PLAY WITH US?
WE NEED YOU!
SOMEBODY HAS TO KEEP THESE FISH AWAY FROM THE SHIP! WHO KNOWS WHAT DAMAGE THEY MIGHT DO?
ALL WE'VE HEARD FROM YOU IS EXCUSES! TAKE OFF THAT OLD SPACESUIT AND JOIN US!
THE SUN FEELS SO GOOD AFTER BEING COOPED UP IN THAT STUFFY SHIP.
YOU TWO HAVE FUN...
I'M GOING TO SECURE THE CAMP-SIGHT!
WELL--WHAT DO WE DO?
THEY SEEM CIVILIZED!
WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO LOSE?
BUT IT'S JUST NOT COMPLETE WITHOUT THE THREE OF US, RIDGE!
HEY! CAN YOU HELP US?
WE'VE BEEN SHIPWRECKED!
DIDN'T YOUR PARENTAL TRIAD EVER EXPLAIN THE FACTS OF LIFE?
EEEEK!
RATS!
KILL THEM!
DAMN VERMIN.
CAPTAIN! LOOKOU...
SHING
OH, YOU SAVED US!
I'M SO EXCITED!
SEE, IT PAYS TO BE ALERT!

I THINK I GOT ONE OF THE LITTLE BUGGERS!
STAUB?
J-JUST A SCRATCH...
D-DID THE CAPTAIN MAKE IT?
YES, YES! HE'S RIGHT HERE! BUT YOU NEED HELP!
THESE BURNS MUST BE BANDAGED IMMEDIATELY! BUT I'VE NO HANDS TO DO IT WITH...
DON'T LOOK AT ME!
WE'VE ONLY ONE GOOD PAIR OF HANDS LEFT AMONG US...
.. TO THE BOATS... TO THE BOATS...
MONA--BOZE--CAN'T YOU PLEASE LEAVE ME BE?
GET NAKED, RIDGE!
C'MON--IT'S FUN!
YOU ARE REALLY STARTING TO GET TO ME!
LEGGO!
FORGET HIM BOZE! NOW HE'S TURNING SOREHEAD!
HE'S SO UPTIGHT HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO HAVE FUN ANYMORE!
THAT'S IT! I'VE HAD IT!
WE'RE CLEARING OUT RIGHT NOW!

LEAVE? BUT WE JUST GOT HERE!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!
NO WAY I'M GOING TO SPEND MY VACATION ON A DESERTED PLANET WITH YOU TWO SEX MANIACS!
YOU PROMISED TO TAKE US CAMPING!
SHORTLY.
RIDGE, DID ANYONE EVER TELL YOU THAT YOU COULD BE EXTREMELY FRUSTRATING?
AND WITHIN ONE OF THE CAVERNOUS HOLDS OF THE SHIP THAT BLASTS AWAY FROM THE WHALE PLANET...
COME ON, YOU ROTTEN BASTARD-- STAJB WAS WOUNDED SAVING YOUR WORTHLESS HIDE! NOW YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN HELP HIM!
...OUR CASTAWAYS HAVE BECOME STOWAWAYS!
OUR QUARRY IS NO MERE WHALE...
T-THE CAPTAIN'S GETTING AWAY SPHINX...Y-YE'VE GOT TO STOP H-HIM--
H-HE CAN'T SURVIVE ALONE...
AND I CAN ONLY CARE FOR SO MANY AT ONCE! NOW I'M GOING TO TEND YOU AS BEST I CAN...
HE BE A DEMON.
...AND LET CAPTAIN ROTWANG NAVIGATE HIS OWN DESTINY!
NAY, HE IS PRINCE OF DEMONS.
SEE? WHAT DID LOON TELL YOU, SELF? WE ARE ALMOST THERE!
NOW OTHERS WILL KNOW THAT LOON HAS FOUND SELF!
HOW ABOUT FREEING ME THEN, LOON?
MEANWHILE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE SECOND AND THIRD CHAMBERS OF ABRAXAS' STOMACH.

OF COURSE, SELF--AS SOON AS WE DOCK...
HEY, EVERYONE! COME HONOR LOON!
LOON HAS FOUND SELF! HERE HE IS! COME LOOK!
THERE ARE HORDES OF THEM LIVING IN HERE!
EVERY ONE ALTERED BY THE XLEXU SURGEONS...
.. AND ALL MAD AS HATTERS!
HEY! LOON WINS PRIZE! LOON HAS FOUND SELF!
LOON, PLEASE LET ME FREE NOW?
SELF.
SELF.
HEY, BABY-- YOU WANT TO SLEEP WITH LOON? MAYBE LOON WILL INTRODUCE YOU TO SELF...
LISTEN UP, EVERYBODY! THE WHALE IS VERY SICK! WE'VE GOT TO WORK TOGETHER AND...
SELF
SELF
SELF
SELF
SELF
SELF
SELF
SELF
SELF

ABRAXAS & THE EARTHMAN continues next issue

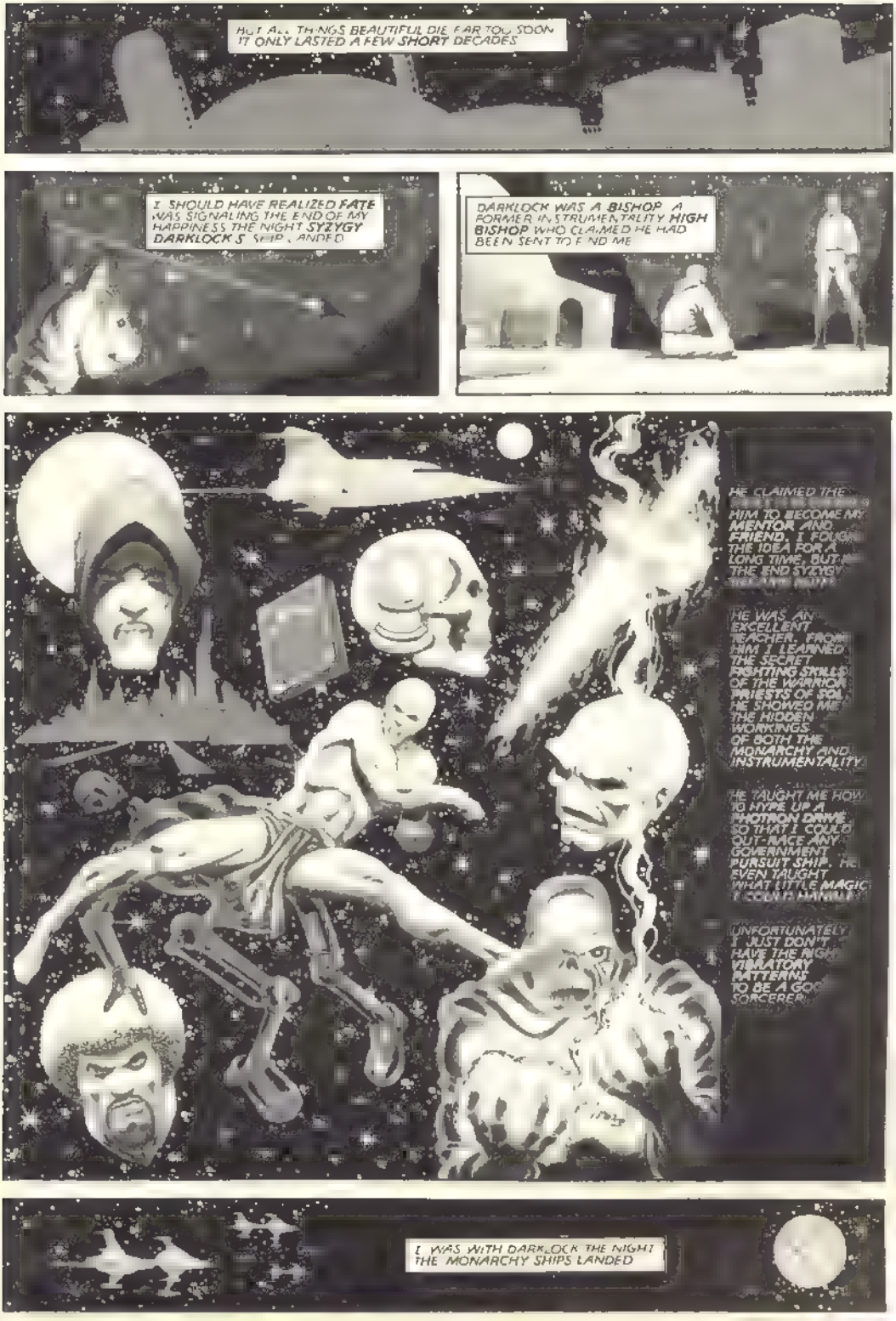
SAFE, UNDER A NICE STURDY SUPPORT BEAM LIKE ANY INTELLIGENT BEING WOULD BE
UNLIKE SOME FOLKS, I'VE AN AVERSION TO GIANT BOULDERS CRASHING ON TOP OF ME
BUT I SUGGEST WE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL THIS CONFUSION AND GET OUR TAILS TO THE HANGAR DECK
HELP! OVER HERE!
WHAT'S THAT?!
IS THAT GIRL WE SAW EARLIER SHE'S TRAPPED UNDER A BOULDER
VANTH THE TIME
YOU MEN, HUNT UP SOME THICK BEAMS! WE'LL PRY HER OUT!
BY THE STARS! THAT MONSTER MUST WEIGH AT LEAST 5 TONS!
SEE
AFRAID IT WON'T BE THAT EASY MATE
FUNNY ISN'T IT?

IT WAS THAT WAY BACK ON MY HOMEWORLD BYFREXIA, IN THE MILKY WAY GALAXY
PERHAPS ALL PLANETS IN THE UNIVERSE ARE SO CURSED I DON'T KNOW
AND I REMEMBER THE SOUND OF THE SNOW BEARS
I REMEMBER THE [illegible] BACK ON BYFREXIA
THE SOUND OF THE HUNGRY SNOW BEARS
FEEDING ON MY PARENTS.
I ESCAPED THEIR APPETITE
BUT FOUND MYSELF ALONE AND OVER 50 KILOMETERS FROM ANY SETTLEMENT
A PERSON, IF HE IS HIGHLY SKILLED IN THE TRICKS OF SURVIVAL CAN SURVIVE FOR SHORT PERIODS OF TIME IN BYFREXIA'S WILDERNESS
AN UNSKILLED YOUTH WON'T LAST A DAY
THAT IS UNLESS HE'S LUCKY ENOUGH TO COME ACROSS A WEIRD GLOWING SWORD STUCK IN A ROCK
A SWORD THAT EASILY CAME LOOSE FOR ME
A SWORD THAT FILLED ME WITH FIRE
A SWORD THAT INSURED MY SURVIVAL IN AN ENVIRONMENT NEVER MEANT FOR MAN
AT THANKS TO THE POWER OF THE SWORD I GREW STRONG AS STRONG AS ANY TWENTY NORMAL MEN

LATER, DURING THE ZYGOTEAN WAR I FOUND THE SWORD COULD ABSORB ANY ENERGY DIRECTED AGAINST ME
IT COULD THEN TURN THOSE STOLEN FORCES BACK AGAINST MY ENEMIES. IT PROVED TO BE AN INVALUABLE WEAPON
AND A
FOR I WAS TO
INTO MY BODY
REVERSE BY WISHING TO DO SO. A THOUGHT IS ALSO ALL THAT IS NEEDED TO REVERSE THE PROCESS
BLOOD CHANGE RELATIONSHIPS BREED STRANGER SIDE EFFECTS
IT SEEMS MY SYMBIOTIC LINK WITH THE BLADE ALSO MAKES ME IMMORTAL
TIME AND DISEASE HAVE NO EFFECT ON ME. EVEN PHYSICAL HARM IS ONLY A THREAT IF IT IS IMMEDIATELY FATAL. OTHERWISE THE SWORD HEALS MY WOUNDS WITH AMAZING SPEED
BUT DESPITE ALL THIS POWER I'M NEARLY AS HELPLESS IN THIS SITUATION AS THESE MINERS
I'VE NO FINE CONTROL OVER THE SWORD'S ENERGY RAYS
IF I TRIED CUTTING THE GIRL OUT OF THIS ROCK I FEAR I'D BRING THIS ENTIRE CAVERN DOWN ON OUR HEADS
BESIDES IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THAT HAPPENS WITHOUT MY HELP
PERHAPS THAT HYDRO-ATOMIC JACK CAN RAISE THE SLACK ENOUGH FOR US TO PULL THAT GIRL OUT
I WONDER IF THERE'S A STEADY TOOL
IT'D BETTER BE THAN I PROVED TO BE FOR AKNATON, THE CREATOR OF MY SWORD WE MET DURING THE ZYG WARS

I JOINED FORCES WITH H M AN EARTHLING NAMED JULIET, THE TOWERING ZA, AND THE WOODLAND S.P.I.T. WHIS PAR, TO BATTLE THE ZYGOTEAN CONQUERORS
BUT THE EVIL TURNED OUT TO BE MORE THAN WE COULD HANDLE
WE JUST COULDN'T STOP THEM
SO AKNATON TURNED TO THE INFINITY HORN, HIS DOOMSDAY WEAPON
HE FIGURED EVERY- AS HE DID
BETTER DEAD THAN LIVING UNDER THE TYRANNICAL HEEL OF THE ZYGOTEANS
THE HORN SOUNDED THE MILKY WAY GALAXY DIED
IT TOOK ALL THE ZYGO- TEANS WITH IT AND OVER A ZILLION HELPLESS BEING WHO NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT THEM
I HELPED AKNATON IN HIS CRIME I BEAR HIS GUILT FOR HE S DEAD BY MY HAND, BUT I LIVE ON
A GOOD TOOL WOULD HAVE FAILED HIM SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, AND THE MILKY WAY WOULD STILL LIVE
THE JACK!!
IT JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE JUICE TO DO THE JOB
I BLEW
WHAT S THAT SOUND ?
THE ROOF!
RUN!!

NO! IT'S GOING TO HOLD... AT LEAST FOR A WHILE
COME BACK!
TOO LATE, VANTH. THEY'RE GONE
JUST LIKE WE SHOULD BE!
YOU BETTER LISTEN TO YOUR FRIEND, MISTER. IT LOOKS LIKE MY LUCK'S RUN OUT. GO ON
NO
WE'RE GOING TO GET YOU OUT OF THIS
HOW? YOU PLANNING TO LIFT THIS MOUNTAIN OFF ME BY YOURSELF?
PERHAPS
COME ON, VANTH. WE HAVEN'T TIME FOR THIS!
REMEMBER THE JOB?!
YES
I REMEMBER. I REMEMBER A LOT OF THINGS
I REMEMBER LANDING ON THE PLANET CALDOR
I BURIED AKNATON THERE, ABANDONED MY SWORD FOR A WHILE AND TRIED TO START A NEW LIFE
I REMEMBER THE GENTLE CAT PEOPLE OF CALDOR WHO TOOK ME INTO THEIR FARMING COMMUNE
I REMEMBER MEETING DELILAH. THERE SHE WAS. EVERYTHING I DREAMED OF IN A WOMAN. BEAUTIFUL, INTELLIGENT, GENTLE
WE SOON FELL IN LOVE. IT WAS THE HAPPIEST TIME OF MY LIFE


BUT ALL THINGS BEAUTIFUL DIE FAR TOO SOON IT ONLY LASTED A FEW SHORT DECADES
I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED FATE WAS SIGNALING THE END OF MY HAPPINESS THE NIGHT SYZYGY DARKLOCK'S SHIP LANDED
DARKLOCK WAS A BISHOP A FORMER INSTRUMENTALITY HIGH BISHOP WHO CLAIMED HE HAD BEEN SENT TO FIND ME
HE CLAIMED THE HIM TO BECOME MY MENTOR AND FRIEND. I FOUGHT THE IDEA FOR A LONG TIME, BUT IN THE END SYZYGY
HE WAS AN EXCELLENT TEACHER. FROM HIM I LEARNED THE SECRET FIGHTING SKILLS OF THE WARRIOR PRIESTS OF SOL. HE SHOWED ME THE HIDDEN WORKINGS OF BOTH THE MONARCHY AND INSTRUMENTALITY
HE TAUGHT ME HOW TO HYPE UP A PHOTRON DRIVE SO THAT I COULD OUT-RACE ANY GOVERNMENT PURSUIT SHIP. HE EVEN TAUGHT WHAT LITTLE MAGIC
UNFORTUNATELY I JUST DON'T HAVE THE NIGHT VIBRATORY PATTERNS TO BE A GOO SORCERER
I WAS WITH DARKLOCK THE NIGHT THE MONARCHY SHIPS LANDED

JEREMY BROOD
Part 1 : "Relativity"
by Stan Dresser

eremy for the last two hours a ve heard
s rationalization. r problem s simple
re a g dam bigot!
You know that can't be true. Char was screened very carefu for this job and and bigotedness would have gotten me kicked straight out
t s down here hat worries me. This s the t t refuses to
t know a that he ey bu they only tested up here. your mind's n fine shape
What do you mean the?

Is that smart-ass middle class upbringing of yours shit?
So tell me
Did your preacher really try to shock God into you with an electric barstool when you were a kid or were you bullshitting me
Did you did you mean that about the
it's getting better
platonic
SUB SPACE TRANS
BEEP BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
When was the last one?
About three years ago Earth time
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
Funny that seems like only yesterday

There's a new President in office by now. He's probably cut the space budget and they're telling us to come back home.
Ah, crap.
What's it?
Sounds like it's the coordinates coming through.
Uh huh.
As I read it, the civilizations at some sort of social crossroads and we're supposed to nudge them in the right direction.
Oh yeah? How?
That's the garbled part.
I don't suppose we have enough goddam power to send a return message, to ask for a repeat."
"Not this far out. We could land someplace, tap into a local energy source, maybe build a transmitting station."
"And then spend six months accelerating to lightspeed. Jesus Fucking Christ, Jeremy, what do YOU think?"
"Well, according to the S.O.P.M., in cases where reasonable doubt exists as to the exact objective and/or procedure regarding a priority assignment, clarification of mission parameters is required before..."
"Yeah, me too. Fuck it. Let's go on in."
Check.

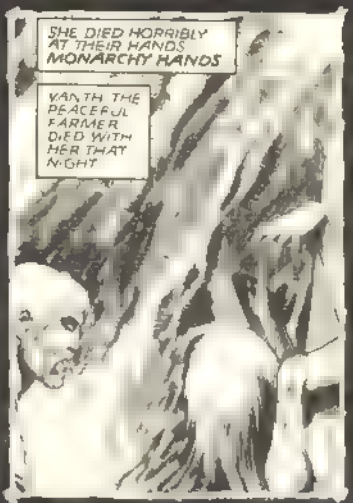
s that a problem? I thought
colorful language was your
forte
Fuck you
How long to
we get there?
Couple of months, part time.
Planetary time, who knows about
two hundred years
Two centuries. Shit. Enemy
could be a whole different
place by then
If we're
lucky
SNIF
Blessed
Privileged
Come on, you sluts. Move
MOVE! Crack whip your
ouse ridden hides

Sing until your voices reach the very heavens of Hoobar below. Sing, damn you. SING!
KRAK
Now, Brynne
...st about
Now
Sing yourself, pig
Hunh?
Fear Brynne!
WHAK!

RUN!
THUD
WHAP

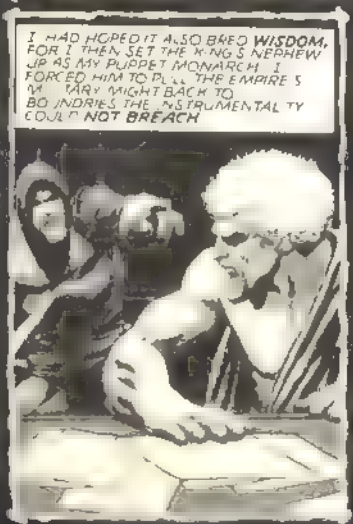
You athe st b tch. Plead for your life! Beg me not to
SPTU!
Sut
That was just over a year ago.

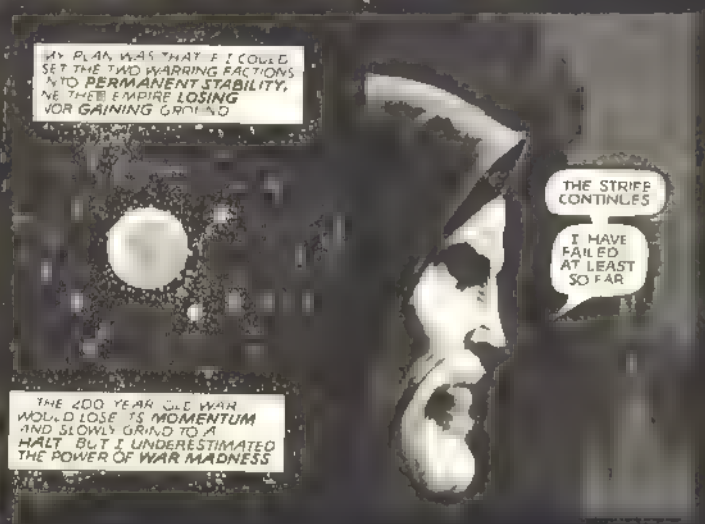
THE SHIPS WERE GONE BY THE TIME I REACHED THE VILLAGE THEY HAD BEEN SENT TO DESTROY
MY VILLAGE
...MY FRIENDS
...MY WIFE.


SHE DIED HORRIBLY AT THEIR HANDS MONARCHY HANDS
VANTH THE PEACEFUL FARMER DIED WITH HER THAT NIGHT

FROM THE ASHES OF OUR FUNERAL PYRE STEPPED VANTH DREADSTAR, WIELDER OF THE SWORD AND SEEKER OF VENGEANCE

T TOOK ME YEARS AND A MULTITUDE OF IDENTITIES BEFORE I WAS ABLE TO MAKE KING NELLOR PAY FOR HIS SINS. BUT IMMORTALITY BREEDS PATIENCE


I HAD HOPED IT ALSO BRED WISDOM, FOR I THEN SET THE KING'S NEPHEW UP AS MY PUPPET MONARCH. I FORCED HIM TO PLAY THE EMPIRE'S MILITARY MIGHT BACK TO ITS BOUNDRIES. THE INSTRUMENTALITY COULD NOT BREACH


MY PLAN WAS THAT IF I COULD SET THE TWO WARRING FACTIONS INTO PERMANENT STABILITY, NEITHER EMPIRE LOSING NOR GAINING GROUND
THE 200 YEAR OLD WAR WOULD LOSE ITS MOMENTUM AND SLOWLY GRIND TO A HALT BUT I UNDERESTIMATED THE POWER OF WAR MADNESS
THE STRIFE CONTINUES
I HAVE FAILED AT LEAST SO FAR

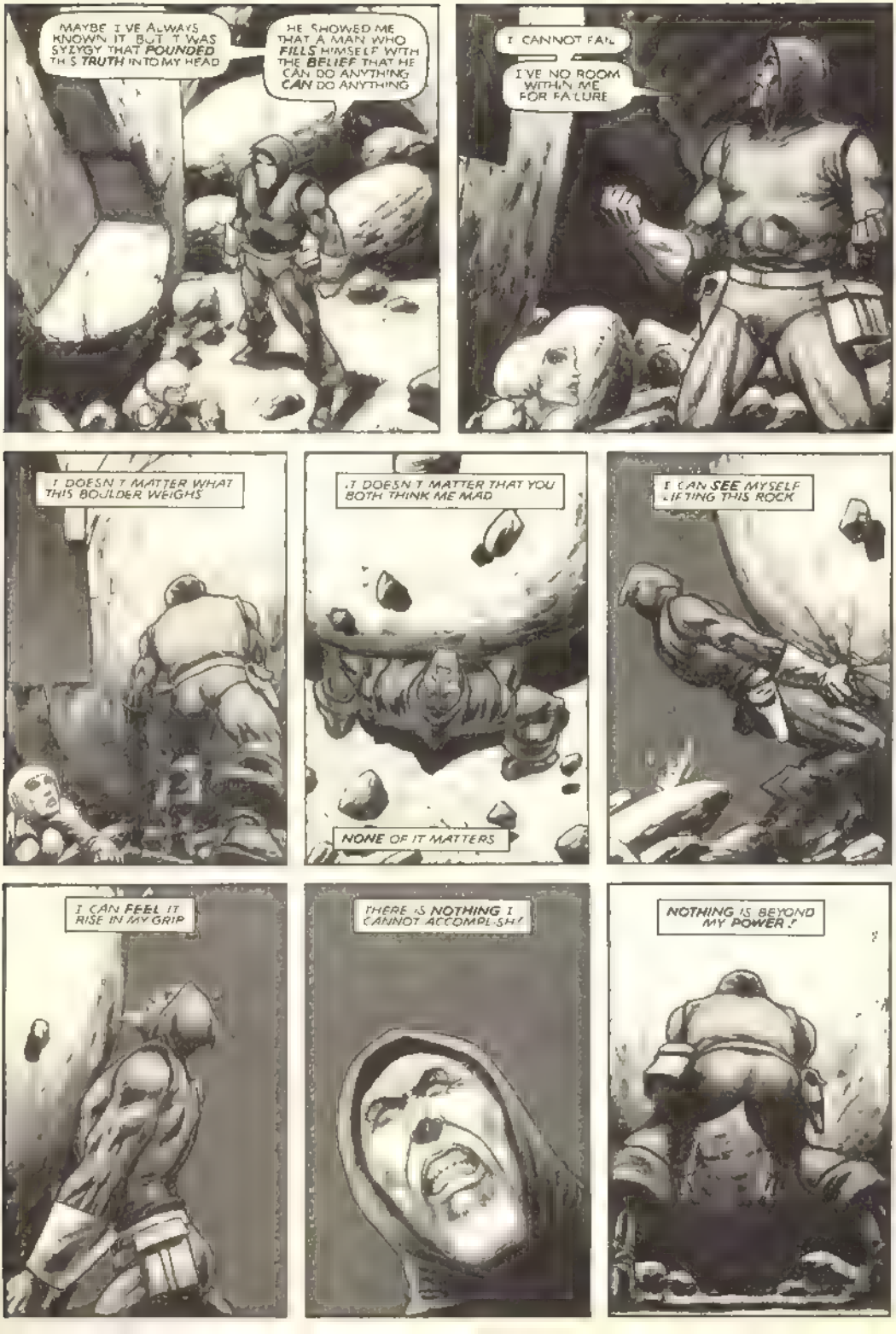
BUT I'M THROUGH WITH FAILURE NEVER AGAIN
OEDI, YOU BETTER CLEAR OUT WHAT I'M ABOUT TO TRY MAY CAUSE ANOTHER CAVE IN
NO WAY, VANTH! YOU AND I CAME TO THIS DANCE TOGETHER
WE'LL LEAVE TOGETHER
BESIDES WHAT HAS TO BE DONE CAN ONLY BE DONE BY YOU
YOU'RE THE BIG WHEEL IN THIS COSMIC POWER PLAY
WITHOUT YOU THERE'S NO SHOW SO I'M STAYING TO HELP ANY WAY I CAN
HE HE'S A CAT!
NO, YOU'RE WRONG OEDI'S A MAN, THE LAST OF HIS RACE
AND A FRIEND
JUST WHO ARE YOU?
I'M THE MAN WHO'S GOING TO LIFT THAT BOULDER OFF YOU!
WHAT?! ARE YOU MAD?
THIS ROCK MUST WEIGH TEN TONS
IT PROBABLY WEIGHS CLOSER TO FIFTEEN TONS BUT DON'T WORRY
I'M STRONGER THAN I LOOK

YOU MUST ALSO BE A LOT CRAZIER THAN YOU LOOK!
BE READY TO YANK HER OUT OF THERE, OFD
UH SURE
BUT YOU BETTER STAND BACK A LITTLE WAY
THIS IS PROBABLY GOING TO BRING DOWN SOME LOOSE ROCKS
SCERAAG!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!
I THINK I FEEL IT MOVING!
IT IS MOVING!!
KERRAAG!

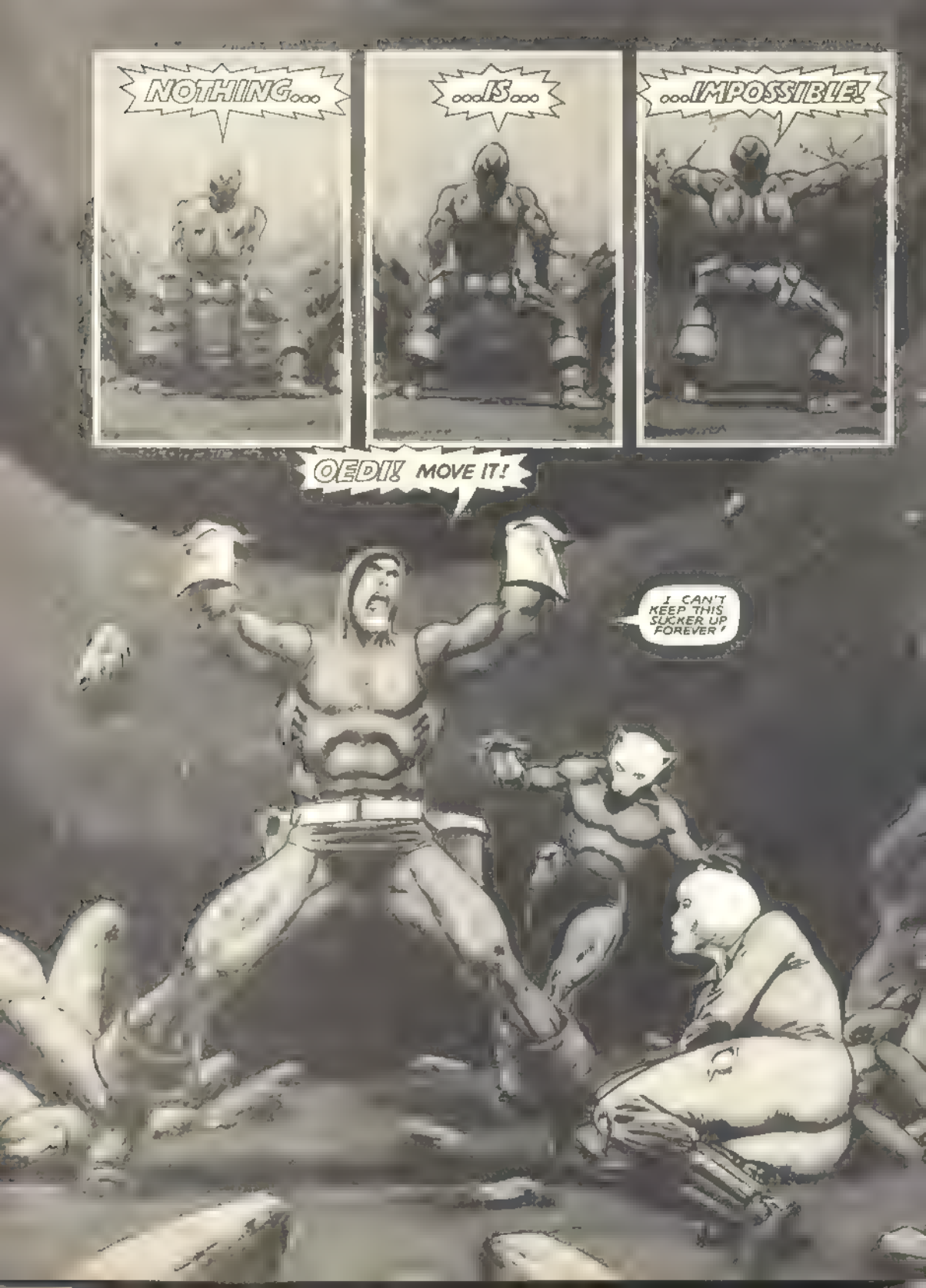
UNFORTUNATELY THE FLESH IS WILLING
NO!
BUT THE STONE IS WEAK
AS WEAK AS THE DREAMS OF GALACTIC PEACE
DREAMS SMASHED LIKE THE TWISTED SHELL OF THAT MONARCHY SPACE FORTRESS WE CAME UPON LAST WEEK
THE FORTRESS WAS THE REALM'S MIGHTIEST WEAPON. EQUAL TO ANYTHING THE INSTRUMENTALITY SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO THROW AGAINST IT
BUT THERE IT FLOATED GUTTED AND DEAD
HOW?
HOW?
THEY'VE OBVIOUSLY DEVELOPED SOMETHING MORE POWERFUL THAN THESE FORTS
PERHAPS SOMETHING LIKE AN INTERDIMENSIONAL LASER OR A NEW FIRING SYSTEM. WHO KNOWS?
BUT WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S PROVEN SUPERIOR TO THE MONARCHY'S BEST I'VE BEEN AFRAID THIS MIGHT HAPPEN

THE RELIGIOUS FERVOR THAT MOTIVATES THE CITIZENRY OF THE INSTRUMENTALITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MORE POWERFUL SOCIAL FORCE THAN ANY LOYALTY THE MONARCHY'S ROYAL FAMILY HAS BEEN ABLE TO INSPIRE
GOD
EXACTLY... AND KNEW IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THAT FANATICAL RELIGIOUS DRIVE TRANSLATED ITSELF INTO TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT
ESPECIALLY WHEN THAT SOCIAL DRIVE IS BEING DIRECTED BY A MASTER STRATEGIST LIKE THE LORD HIGH PAPAL
I FEAR THE INSTRUMENTALITY HAS FINALLY GAINED THE UPPER HAND IN THIS LITTLE GAME OF COSMIC CONQUEST
THIS BODES ILL FOR THE MONARCHY
YEAH, LOOKS LIKE WE PICKED THE WRONG TYRANTS TO SIDE WITH
WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST WE DO?
ABANDON THE MONARCHY TO ITS OWN RESOURCES AND HOPE IT SURVIVES LONG ENOUGH
FOR US TO PUT PLAN M INTO OPERATION
WHAT'S PLAN M? I NEVER HEARD YOU TWO SPEAK OF IT
NOR WILL YOU HEAR US SPEAK OF IT NOW.
PLAN M IS DANGEROUS UNSPEAKABLY DANGEROUS AND THE LESS YOU KNOW ABOUT IT THE BETTER FOR YOU
ESPECIALLY IF YOU'RE CAPTURED
BUT PLAN M REQUIRES A LOT OF EQUIPMENT WE DON'T HAVE
THE FIRST STEP ALONE REQUIRES A GIANT CARGO SHIP YOU DON'T HAPPEN TO HAVE ONE STASHED SOMEWHERE DO YOU?

NOW, BUT I KNOW WHERE WE MIGHT BORROW ONE FROM THE INSTRUMENTALITY
THERE'S THIS MINING COLONY CALLED TORTORELZOR ITS SECURITY FORCE IS MINIMAL AND
THAT'S HOW WE CAME TO BE HERE
WE CAME TO HIJACK A SHIP, WE COULD SAVE A GALAXY BUT I CAN'T GO ON WITHOUT SAVING HIS GIRL
I KNOW, I'M JEOPARDIZING THE GREATER OF THE TWO GOALS BUT I JUST CAN'T HELP IT
BUT YOU TRIED! THE BOULDER'S TOO HEAVY
I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT
I KNOW YOU AIN'T UNDERSTAND THAT CEDI
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT PLAN M IS YOU DON'T REALIZE WHAT A MAD GAME DARKLOCK AND I ARE PLAYING WITH THE GALAXY
I'M ABOUT TO TAKE ON THE IMPOSSIBLE, ABOUT TO DO THE UNTHINKABLE BUT WHAT I HAVE DO YOU THINK I HAVE
IF I CAN'T SAVE THIS ONE SINGLE LIFE?
I'VE GOT TO START HERE I'VE GOT TO SEE EVERYTHING SYZYGY EVER TAUGHT ME TO SUCCEED NOW
IF I CAN'T SAVE THIS ONE LONE SOUL HOW CAN I HOPE TO SAVE A GALAXY FROM ITSELF?
YOU SEE IT'S ALL A MATTER OF BELIEVING OR NOT BELIEVING


MAYBE I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN IT, BUT IT WAS SYZYGY THAT *POUNDED* THIS *TRUTH* INTO MY HEAD
HE SHOWED ME THAT A MAN WHO *FILLS* HIMSELF WITH THE *BELIEF* THAT HE CAN DO ANYTHING *CAN* DO ANYTHING
I CANNOT FAIL
I'VE NO ROOM WITHIN ME FOR FAILURE
I DOESN'T MATTER WHAT THIS BOULDER WEIGHS
IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT YOU BOTH THINK ME MAD
NONE OF IT MATTERS
I CAN *SEE* MYSELF LIFTING THIS ROCK
I CAN *FEEL* IT RISE IN MY GRIP
THERE IS *NOTHING* I CANNOT ACCOMPLISH!
NOTHING IS BEYOND MY *POWER*!

FOR I AM VANTH DREADSTAR!
I AM THE WIELDER OF THE SWORD!
I AM THE SLAYER OF KINGS!
I AM THE KILLER OF WIZARDS!
I AM THE DESTROYER OF GALAXIES!
I HAVE FACED DEATH SQUARELY
AND I HAVE CONQUERED IT!
I DID IT ONCE!
I CAN DO IT AGAIN!
FOR I AM POWER!
I AM DREADSTAR!
I AM POWER!
I AM DREADSTAR!

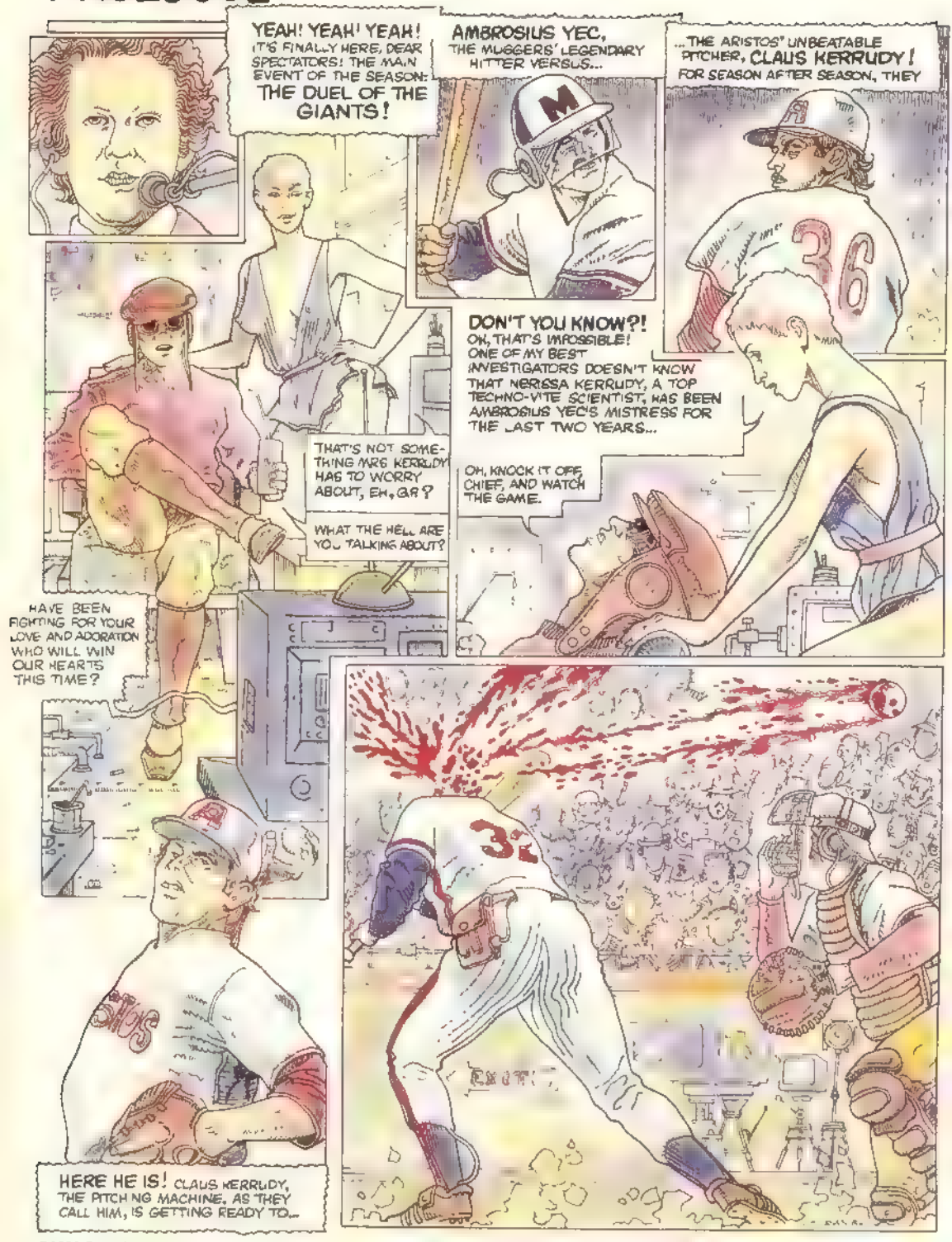

NOTHING...
...IS...
...IMPOSSIBLE!
OEDI! MOVE IT!
I CAN'T KEEP THIS SUCKER UP FOREVER!

UP YOU GO, LADY!
IT'S TIME WE FOUND YOU A NEW HOME!
HEAD FOR THE TUNNEL!
THIS PLACE IS COMING DOWN!
WELL IT LOOKS LIKE WE ALL MADE IT
WE CAN LEAVE THE GIRL HERE SOMEONE WILL BE ALONG TO HELP HER
MEANWHILE WE'VE GOT A SHIP TO CATCH AND WE'RE RUNNING LATE
SEE YOU AROUND KID
BYE!
BYE
THE HANGAR DECK'S PROBABLY JUST DOWN THIS NEXT TUNNEL
SO I SAYS TO THE CHIEF "A DISASTER LIKE A CAVE-IN IS NO PLACE FOR A MAN OF THE CLOTH" AND HE
OH NO
NOT AGAIN!

SORRY FELLOWS NO TIME TO CHAT!
MOMENTS LATER
THERE SHE IS OEDI!
ALL FUELED AND READY TO GO!
SHIP #A457, THIS IS CONTROL YOU HAVE NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED FOR TAKE OFF PLEASE RETURN TO HANGAR DECK #51
I REPEAT, RETURN TO HANGAR DECK #51
THIS IS YOUR LAST WARNING

BIG BUNDLE TO LIGHTCUTTER II WE HAVE YOU ON OUR SCREEN
YOU CAN BEGIN DOCKING PROCEDURES
CARGO BAY DOORS ARE OPEN, AND THE DECK IS CLEARED FOR LANDING
COME ON IN
DOCKING COMPLETED
NICE SHIP, IT WILL DO JUST FINE
BUT WHAT TOOK YOU TWO SO LONG?
OLD MUSCLES HERE HAD TO DO SOME WEIGHT LIFTING BEFORE WE COULD LEAVE
I'LL EXPLAIN LATER
SO WHAT NOW? WE'VE HIJACKED THIS SHIP..
WHAT OTHER CRAZY STUNTS DO WE HAVE TO PULL TO MAKE THIS PLAN M OF YOURS WORK?
THE NEXT STEP IS QUITE SIMPLE REALLY
NOW WE ROB A CHURCH
OUR CREW'S ADVENTURES CONTINUE IN DREADSTAR COMICS
SEE PAGE 88 FOR MORE INFORMATION!

PROLOGUE:


YEAH! YEAH! YEAH! IT'S FINALLY HERE, DEAR SPECTATORS! THE MAIN EVENT OF THE SEASON: THE DUEL OF THE GIANTS!
AMBROSIUS YEC, THE MUGGERS' LEGENDARY HITTER VERSUS...
...THE ARISTOS' UNBEATABLE PITCHER, CLAUS KERRUDY! FOR SEASON AFTER SEASON, THEY
DON'T YOU KNOW?! OH, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! ONE OF MY BEST INVESTIGATORS DOESN'T KNOW THAT NERISSA KERRUDY, A TOP TECHNO-VITE SCIENTIST, HAS BEEN AMBROSIUS YEC'S MISTRESS FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS...
OH, KNOCK IT OFF, CHIEF, AND WATCH THE GAME.
THAT'S NOT SOMETHING MRS KERRUDY HAS TO WORRY ABOUT, EH, GA?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR YOUR LOVE AND ADORATION WHO WILL WIN OUR HEARTS THIS TIME?
HERE HE IS! CLAUS KERRUDY, THE PITCHING MACHINE, AS THEY CALL HIM, IS GETTING READY TO...

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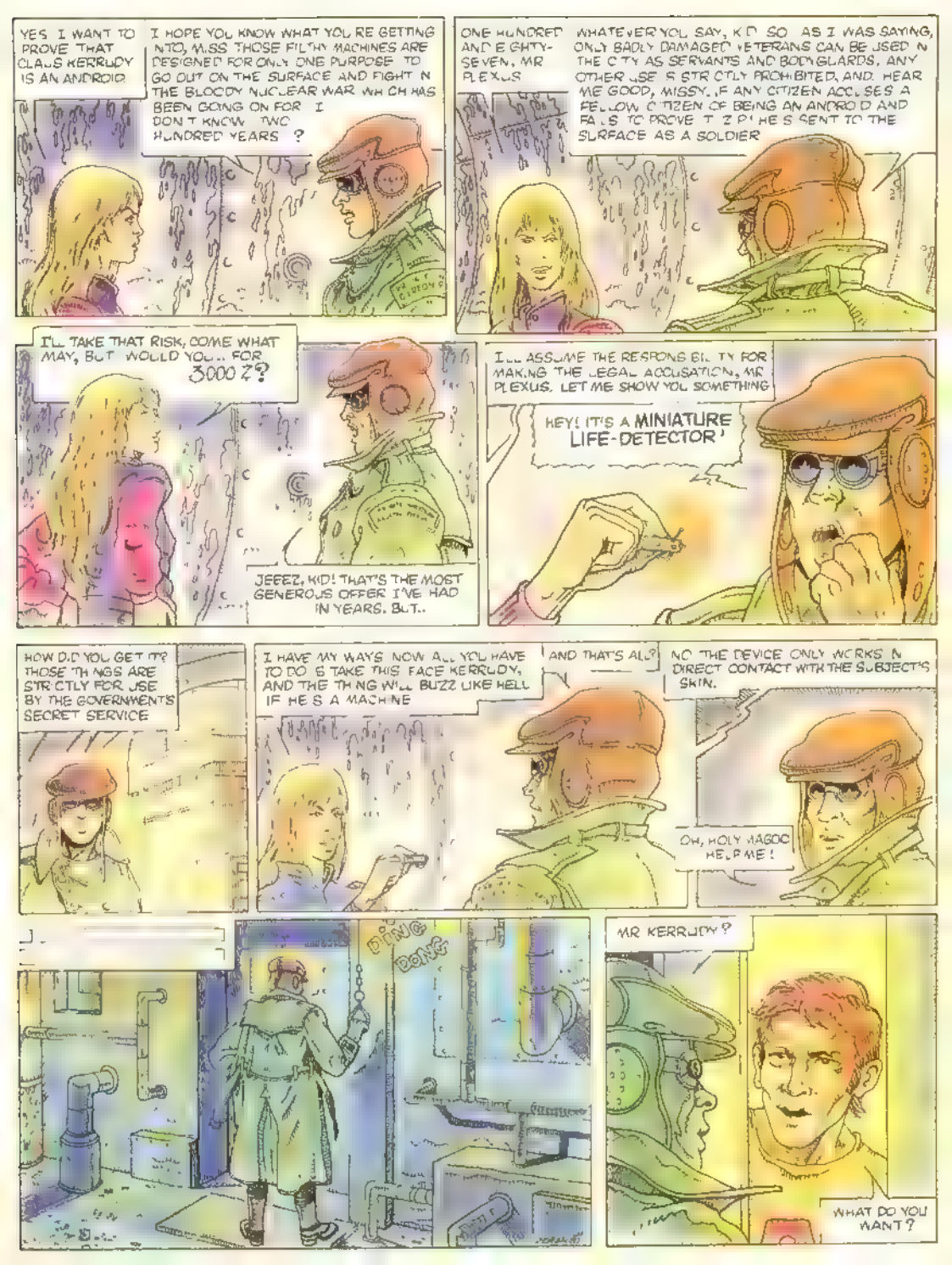
HOLY MAGOO!
NONSENSE, G.P.! YOU KNOW ANDROIDS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO PLAY, AND THAT THERE'S NO WAY TO TRICK THE LIFE DETECTOR MACHINE THROUGH WHICH EVERY BALL PLAYER HAS GOT TO PASS BEFORE STARTING THE GAME.
YES, DEAR SPECTATORS, WE'VE LOST ONE OF THE ALL-TIME GREAT HITTERS TODAY, BUT WHAT A GAME! WHAT A PITCH! WHAT A MAN! LOOK AT H.M. CLAUS KERRUDY, STANDING THERE, COOL AND CALM, WAITING FOR HIS NEXT OPPONENT AS THOUGH NOTHING HAD HAPPENED! WHAT A PITCHER! OF COURSE AS YOU KNOW, HE WON'T BE PROSECUTED. FATAL ACCIDENTS ARE NOT UNCOMMON ON THE BALL FIELD. THE AUTHORITIES KNOW THAT, THE PLAYERS KNOW IT, AND WE ALL ACCEPT IT!
IT'S A TOUGH GAME. BUT WE LOVE IT!!!
WHAT A PITCH, DEAR SPECTATORS! WHAT A PITCH! AS SOME OF YOU CAN REMEMBER, ALMOST THE SAME THING HAPPENED FIFTEEN YEARS AGO WHEN GREAT ROOFO McK KILLED JULIUS ROMANOV, BUT HE DIDN'T DEMOLISH HIM LIKE THIS...
THAT. THAT WAS BEYOND HUMAN STRENGTH, CHIEF. ONLY A ROBOT COULD'VE DONE IT!
THE BALL GAME
A GEDEON PLEXUS ADVENTURE by ZORAN
MR PLEXUS! MR. PLEXUS!
I NEED YOUR PROFESSIONAL HELP, MR PLEXUS.

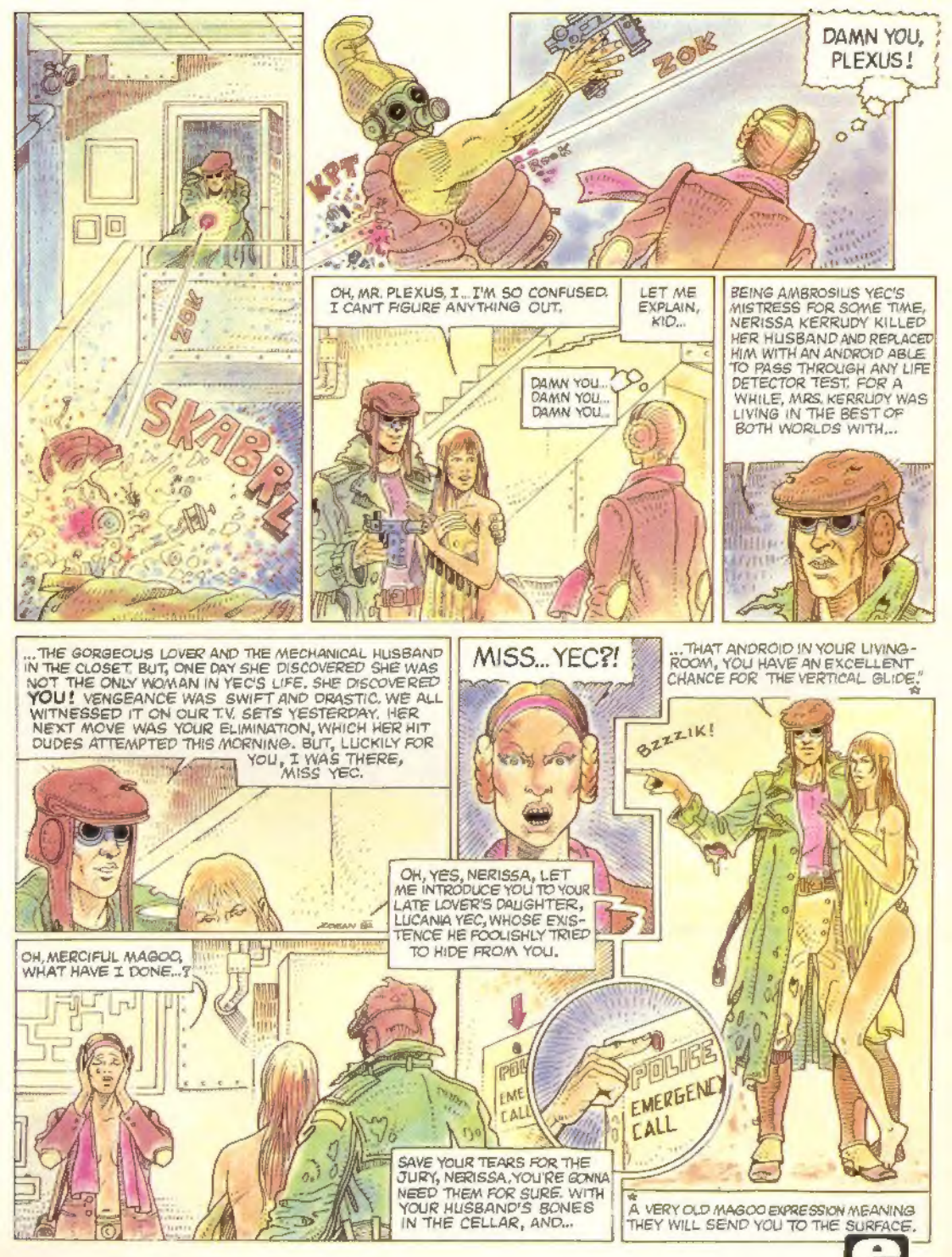
YOU SUCKER!
BUT HE MOVED, J.J.! HE MOVED!
DAMN YOU ZAMBO! GET HIM, NOW!
HANG ON, KID. THEY'LL BE AFTER US IN A ZIP!
THIS BIKE OF YOURS IS TERRIFIC, MR PLEXUS.
IN MY BUSINESS, IT PAYS TO ALWAYS HAVE A CARD UP YOUR SLEEVE, LITTLE LADY.
WE'VE LOST THEM. NOW... BEFORE YOU BEGIN WITH YOUR STORY, LET ME TELL YOU THAT MY DAILY FEE IS 100 £. CAN YOU AFFORD IT?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE DOUGH, MR PLEXUS. I WANT YOU TO GET THAT BLOODY MACHINE THAT KILLED AMBROSIUS YEC
WHAT?!


YES. I WANT TO PROVE THAT CLAUS KERRUDY IS AN ANDROID
I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GETTING INTO, MISS. THOSE FILTHY MACHINES ARE DESIGNED FOR ONLY ONE PURPOSE: TO GO OUT ON THE SURFACE AND FIGHT IN THE BLOODY NUCLEAR WAR WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR I DON'T KNOW... TWO HUNDRED YEARS?
ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVEN, MR PLEXUS
WHATEVER YOU SAY, KID. SO AS I WAS SAYING, ONLY BADLY DAMAGED VETERANS CAN BE USED IN THE CITY AS SERVANTS AND BODYGUARDS. ANY OTHER USE IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED, AND, HEAR ME GOOD, MISSY, IF ANY CITIZEN ACCUSES A FELLOW CITIZEN OF BEING AN ANDROID AND FAILS TO PROVE IT, HE IS SENT TO THE SURFACE AS A SOLDIER
I'LL TAKE THAT RISK, COME WHAT MAY, BUT WOULD YOU... FOR 3000 Z?
JEEEZ, KID! THAT'S THE MOST GENEROUS OFFER I'VE HAD IN YEARS. BUT..
I'LL ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAKING THE LEGAL ACCUSATION, MR PLEXUS. LET ME SHOW YOU SOMETHING
HEY! IT'S A MINIATURE LIFE-DETECTOR!
HOW DID YOU GET IT? THOSE THINGS ARE STRICTLY FOR USE BY THE GOVERNMENT'S SECRET SERVICE
I HAVE MY WAYS. NOW ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TAKE THIS FACE KERRUDY, AND THE THING WILL BUZZ LIKE HELL IF HE'S A MACHINE
AND THAT'S ALL?
NO. THE DEVICE ONLY WORKS IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE SUBJECT'S SKIN.
OH, HOLY MAGOC HELP ME!
DING DONG
MR KERRUDY?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

MY NAME IS PLEXUS!
OH, YES, THE JOURNALIST WHO PHONED THIS MORNING. COME IN.
OUCH!
WHY DID YOU DO THAT, MAN? HEY, IT'S A LIFE-DETECTOR!
IT DIDN'T BUZZ!
YOU FILTHY...
THUMP!
WAIT! LET ME EXPLAIN!!!
WHAT A BLOW! HE CAN'T BE HUMAN! THAT DEVICE IS A SHIT.
KILL!
THE HELL YOU WILL!
SHIT
WHAT'S THAT?!

IT'S A RAT!
A RAT?
AND WHAT THE HELL IS... HEY! IT'S ALIVE! SO WE'RE NOT THE ONLY LIVING CREATURES IN THE CITY AFTER ALL...
BUT, WHO ARE YOU?
ONE QUESTION AT A TIME, MR. PLEXUS. YOU ARE GIDEON PLEXUS, THE PRIVATE EYE HIRED BY THAT SILLY LITTLE SLUT, AREN'T YOU? WELL, YOU HAVE COME A LONG WAY, SO YOU DESERVE SOME ANSWERS. PLEASE COME IN, AND CLOSE THE DOOR.
MY NAME IS NERISSA KERRUDY, AND INDEED, WE ARE NOT THE ONLY LIVING BEINGS IN THE CITY. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST EVERYONE HAS THOUGHT WE WERE ALONE IN OUR UNDERGROUND SHELTER, BUT TWO YEARS AGO, WHILE...
...WORKING ON A SUPERPOWERFUL LIFE DETECTOR IN THE HIGH TECHNOVITE INSTITUTE, I DETECTED LIFE IN THE LOWER PARTS OF THE CITY. I WENT DOWN THERE AND I FOUND RATS. MILLIONS OF RATS! FASCINATING LITTLE CREATURES, AND AS YOU CAN SEE, THEY CAN BE VERY USEFUL. CAREFULLY ATTACHED TO AN ANDROID THEY WILL TRICK ANY LIFE DETECTOR...
WHERE IS KERRUDY?
YOU MEAN THE REAL ONE? YOU WILL MEET HIM SOON, MR. PLEXUS.
HOW SOON?
RIGHT NOW!
IT'S FEEDING TIME FOR MY PETS.

ADIOS, MR. PRIVATE DICK! THE SLUT WHO HIRED YOU SHALL BE NEXT!
THIS MUST BE KERRUDY.
GREAT MAGOO HELP ME! THEY'RE COMING! I'VE GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!
STOMP! STOMP!
KNOCK KNOCK
HMM... SOLID METAL.
I HOPE MY BLASTER STILL WORKS.
DING DONG
IT HAS TO BE PLEXUS...
DONG
HALLO, SWEETHEART! LET ME LOOK AT YOU. YOUNG...VERY YOUNG... AND NOTHING SPECIAL...
?!!
AND THAT BASTARD PREFERRED YOU TO ME!
KILL HER, ZAMBO!
NO... PLEASE DON'T...


ZOK
SKABRL
KPT
ZOK
DAMN YOU, PLEXUS!
OH, MR. PLEXUS, I... I'M SO CONFUSED. I CAN'T FIGURE ANYTHING OUT.
LET ME EXPLAIN, KID...
DAMN YOU... DAMN YOU... DAMN YOU...
BEING AMBROSIUS YEC'S MISTRESS FOR SOME TIME, NERISSA KERRUDY KILLED HER HUSBAND AND REPLACED HIM WITH AN ANDROID ABLE TO PASS THROUGH ANY LIFE DETECTOR TEST. FOR A WHILE, MRS. KERRUDY WAS LIVING IN THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS WITH...
...THE GORGEOUS LOVER AND THE MECHANICAL HUSBAND IN THE CLOSET. BUT, ONE DAY SHE DISCOVERED SHE WAS NOT THE ONLY WOMAN IN YEC'S LIFE. SHE DISCOVERED YOU! VENGEANCE WAS SWIFT AND DRASTIC. WE ALL WITNESSED IT ON OUR T.V. SETS YESTERDAY. HER NEXT MOVE WAS YOUR ELIMINATION, WHICH HER HIT DUDES ATTEMPTED THIS MORNING. BUT, LUCKILY FOR YOU, I WAS THERE, MISS YEC.
MISS... YEC?!
...THAT ANDROID IN YOUR LIVING-ROOM, YOU HAVE AN EXCELLENT CHANCE FOR THE VERTICAL GLIDE."
BZZZIK!
OH, YES, NERISSA, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO YOUR LATE LOVER'S DAUGHTER, LUCANIA YEC, WHOSE EXISTENCE HE FOOLISHLY TRIED TO HIDE FROM YOU.
OH, MERCIFUL MAGOO, WHAT HAVE I DONE...?
POLICE EMERGENCY CALL
SAVE YOUR TEARS FOR THE JURY, NERISSA. YOU'RE GONNA NEED THEM FOR SURE. WITH YOUR HUSBAND'S BONES IN THE CELLAR, AND...
A VERY OLD MAGOO EXPRESSION MEANING THEY WILL SEND YOU TO THE SURFACE.